

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 30 July 2015 at 2.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

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| Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman) | Mrs S.M. Matthews |
| Mr S H Chapman-Allen | Mr R. R. Richmond |
| Mr P.D. Claussen (Vice-Chairman) | Mr D R R Oliver |
| Mr T. J. Jermy | Mr D M Crawford |
| Mr A.P. Joel | Mrs A M Webb |
| Mr T F C Monument | Mr A.C. Stasiak (Substitute Member) |

Also Present

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| Mr S.G. Bambridge | Mr J Newton |
| Mrs E J Bishop | Mr F.J. Sharpe |
| Mr W.P. Borrett | Mr I. Sherwood |
| Mr C G Carter | Mrs L.S. Turner |
| Councillor M. Chapman-Allen | |

In Attendance

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| Helen McAleer | - Senior Democratic Services Officer |
| Tracy Miller | - Business Transformation Officer |
| Greg Pearson | - Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager |

44/15 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45/15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Dimoglou. Councillor Stasiak was present as his Substitute.

46/15 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Chairman suggested that Members might need to hold a Special meeting in September to discuss the Constitution Review before it was presented to Council on 3 October. The matter would be discussed under Agenda Item 11.

47/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

48/15 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Councillors Bambridge, Bishop, Borrett, C Carter, M Chapman-Allen, Newton, Sharpe, Sherwood and Turner were in attendance and were welcomed by the Chairman.

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49/15 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager introduced himself to Members. He was working on developing the Transformation Programme which had four key strategic themes which underpinned the Corporate Plan objectives.

An externally facilitated Workshop had been held on 15 July which had been attended by 20 Members. Posters had set out the four themes and the types of projects they included. Members had been given the chance to feed back on the proposals. The information from that meeting would be distributed to all Members.

There was a further opportunity for Members to comment today and then a draft programme for the next four years would be prepared and presented to Council. Work was still on-going to understand what benefits the projects would bring and how to measure and track those benefits; it was not just about savings. Scrutiny would be involved in tracking the benefits once the programme was agreed.

The Chairman gave a brief overview for the Members that had not been able to attend the Workshop. The key themes that had emerged were:

- how to make the Council more efficient
- whether to sweat assets to generate more revenue
- encouraging people to use different ways to contact the Council (as face-to-face contacts were more expensive)
- a reward/recognition scheme for staff

The real issue was that 50% of residents did not have decent Broadband. There would need to be systems in place for those without good Broadband to be able to contact the Council.

Councillor Bambridge had attended the Workshop and asked that the large amount of suggestions made by Members should be circulated with the other information.

Councillor Joel asked what had happened to the £950,000 the Council had approved for Broadband.

Councillor Richmond had asked the Leader that question and was able to advise that the money would not be released until the British Telecom maps were ready. He noted that the Commercial Property Portfolio generated a lot of money but asked if the true figure of return, with repair and maintenance costs removed, could be provided on an annual basis.

The Chairman explained that the Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager was driving the Transformation Programme and did not have details of costs. One of the Task & Finish Groups should look at how the property portfolio was managed.

Councillor Bambridge referred back to the Broadband money and advised that it was being held in reserve until Broadband had been completely rolled out and would be spent entirely in Breckland.

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Councillor S Chapman-Allen had asked for another, evening meeting for those that could not attend the Workshop. The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager said that another session could be arranged but timeframes were tight and the draft programme was due to be presented to the September Council meeting.

Councillor Borrett was confused at the lack of a report even if it just provided a framework. He had expected Members to get the feedback from the Workshop to consider and was disappointed that another session had not been arranged. A number of issues had been raised at the Workshop which should be discussed to give Officers a steer. He asked what Members were expected to achieve today.

The Chairman explained that Members had the opportunity to listen to the verbal update and add their thoughts, but the substance of the meeting was really in the next Agenda item. Task and Finish Groups (T&FG) would be set up to look into the four themes in detail. The Transformation Programme would create a new way of working and he wanted all Members to be involved.

The Executive Member for Growth said that the former meeting had provided the structure and today was an opportunity to add substance to that and to set the Terms of Reference for the T&FGs.

Councillor Jermy was a member of the County's Economic Development & Transport Committee (EDT) which covered Broadband issues. He was able to confirm that the second contract had been signed and the first set of detailed surveys had commenced. By the end of 2015 it was expected that 80% of Norfolk would have access to Superfast Broadband. As there were no other Breckland Members on the EDT he would be happy to provide updates, but he suggested that the Council might want a Conservative Member on that Group to help put forward Breckland points.

He too was surprised at the lack of a report and thought that any Members that had not attended the Workshop would struggle to participate in the debate today. However, he thought that there had been good engagement at the Workshop with almost half the Members attending at short notice. With regard to Digitalisation he said it would be silly not to go down that route as the public wanted the Council's services to be more accessible and electronic contact also saved money. However, some people would not want to use that route.

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager agreed and said they were looking at ensuring there would be other ways to access services. Digital Access Points would be provided to enable people to use electronic access if they wanted and to provide help to do that, if it was needed. By moving to electronic means of contact it would free up capacity to focus on more vulnerable residents.

Councillor Sharpe asked when the draft report for Council would be available and why it was necessary to submit it to the September meeting.

The Executive Member for People & Information could see that

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Members wanted more time to consider the issues and said the report could be moved back if required. He wanted everyone to have the opportunity to provide input.

Councillor Oliver had not been able to attend the Workshop and asked if it was still possible to put forward ideas. Under the Commercialisation theme and with regard to the problems caused by the Council's lack of a five year housing land supply he suggested that the Council should look at buying land and building itself or lending to Housing Associations, or providing bridging loans for tenants to buy. He was aware that Public Works Loans allowed Councils to borrow large amounts of money at low interest rates and that money could be used to lend on or to build out. He asked if the Council was a Registered Provider. He also asked if the Council was allowed to buy land outside its boundaries and was advised that it could.

The Executive Member for Growth suggested that they speak after the meeting and the Chairman thought it was the sort of topics that the T&FG could look into.

Councillor S Chapman-Allen asked if the intention was to offer services alone or with South Holland and it was confirmed that although the Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager was a joint post and South Holland were at the same stage of developing a Transformation Programme it was different to Breckland's. If it was advantageous to do so, some projects could be run jointly with South Holland or with other partners but the Breckland programme would focus on Breckland residents.

The Executive Member for Growth was very pleased that the programme was looking dynamically at digitalisation. He impressed the importance of the wider effect of that on the rest of the programme. It was the process by which the Council interacted with everything else and it provided the public face of the Council on the website.

Councillor Joel noted that Economic Development was also important and most Councils were putting more money into that whereas Breckland was making it smaller. He hoped it could be supported.

Councillor Borrett was concerned that the Council was spending tax payers' money and there was always a need to look for savings and money should be spent as efficiently as possible. He thought that the Commercialisation of Council services should be looking to create income. For example, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Council had a profitable crematorium. It was not part of their duties as a public body but it raised a lot of money. The Council should be considering how its capital, expertise and land could give other commercial opportunities. It was not just about services, it should be a much broader strand.

The Chairman agreed and said that it was time to take advantage of changes. Central Government would be decreasing the amount of money they gave to Local Authorities and so the Council had to look for ways to raise revenue.

Councillor Webb suggested that the public should be asked what they wanted to see on the website and a wide survey would give more

Action By

weight to any future design.

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager advised that the Council already had a lot of technical information from outside agencies which was informing the decision making process.

Councillor Claussen had not been at the workshop. He was concerned that the Council had lost a lot of highly qualified people and would not have the skill set to deliver the future programme.

The Deputy Leader said that she had taken note of the comments made and there would be a response in the future.

The Chairman thanked Members for the points they had made.

50/15 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Chairman set out the four distinct strands of work for the Task & Finish Groups and some of the topics that they should cover.

1. Commercialisation
 - Procurement and Contracts
 - Developing a community waste scheme
 - Maximising the return on assets
 - Trading the Council's services
2. Alignment of Public Services
 - Co-location of public sector services, bringing them into the Council building to provide a seamless service
3. Organisational Development
 - Service design
 - Reward and recognition scheme
 - Organisational development skills, including mobile working
4. Digitalisation
 - Channel Shift
 - Assisted digital

Membership of the four T&FG should be drawn from the whole Council and comprise of seven Members each and a substitute if possible. The Chairmen of the T&FG would be Members of the O&SC as required by the Constitution. Executive Members were not eligible to sit as members of the T&FG but would be very welcome to attend the meetings and provide input.

The Groups would need to talk to as many people as possible to represent the interests of residents.

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager agreed to circulate the draft programme after the meeting. He went on to outline the key projects.

Digitalisation

- To provide a new web portal to engage people and to enable 'Book & Pay'

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- To digitalise all Back Office functions (that would be linked to Organisational Design)
- Assisted Digital – to install points to provide a facility for people that needed help or did not have access.

Commercialisation

- How to procure and contract manage
- Meet the Buyer events to grow business
- Consider opportunities to generate income for the Council
- Look at the Asset portfolio

Aligning Public Services

- To have the DWP in the Council building to enable co-working (delivering services in parallel and enabling a single point of contact to address all needs)
- Explore other options for Partnership working with the Health Service, NCC, etc. (The Council owned a number of assets where they could be accommodated).
- Consider other Partnerships.

Organisational Development

- This would closely link with Digitalisation – ensuring services were fit for purpose
- Look at each service and develop it for the future
- Ensure staff were rewarded and recognised and that new skill sets were developed
- Identify learning and development skills and opportunities.

The Executive Member for People & Information suggested that the timescales would be amended to fit with the T&FGs.

Councillor Sharpe thought it was a considerable topic. He asked if the draft report could be brought to Scrutiny before it was presented to Council.

The Chairman explained that the timeframes for the T&FG would be set and their workloads organised. The Groups would report back to Scrutiny. A formal report would then be written with the O&SC's proposals for Council.

Councillor S Chapman-Allen thought that it would be wrong for the four T&FGs to work independently as many of the topics overlapped. However, the Chairman disagreed and said that there was a lot of work and as many Members as possible needed to be involved to represent the residents. There was often a criticism that back-benchers did not know what was happening and this was an opportunity for them to take ownership and have their say.

Councillors S Chapman-Allen and Bambridge both thought that most of the proposals were not new and had been approved before but not progressed. They agreed that it was a fantastic opportunity and hoped that it would get done this time.

The Chairman acknowledged that but said it was a new Council term and a good opportunity for the Members to drive it forward.

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Councillor Claussen needed to be convinced and did not understand how it would work fundamentally. He only cared about Breckland and felt there was pressure to fit with South Holland.

Councillor M Chapman-Allen asked about the timeframe as many Councillors were away on holiday in August which was traditionally a recess with very few meetings scheduled.

The Chairman agreed that the timeframe was critical. As the Executive Member had kindly agreed, the report to Council could be put back to the October or even the November meeting if necessary.

Four Chairmen were identified:

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| Digitalisation | Terry Jermy |
| Commercialisation | Adrian Stasiak |
| Aligning Public Services | Shirley Matthews |
| Organisational Development | Sam Chapman-Allen |

The Chairman asked for an e-mail to be sent to all Members asking for volunteers. He recommended that Members should sit on one Group only as there would be a lot of work in a short period of time. It would be good to get a balance of town and country Members on each Group.

It was suggested that the Group Chairmen should meet with the Officers to agree the framework and what was expected to be achieved and then a timeframe could be agreed. It was hoped that the first T&FG meetings would take place late August/early September.

51/15 HEALTH SCRUTINY (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Nothing to report.

52/15 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (AGENDA ITEM 9)

None.

53/15 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 10)

None.

54/15 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Chairman pointed out that the Task & Finish Groups were not the only items for Scrutiny. There would continue to be Executive Member Portfolio updates at each meeting and the Corporate Plan and Performance would be looked at in future meetings.

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager was also responsible for Performance and the new Performance Framework would ensure that the organisation was on track to deliver the objectives of the Corporate Plan. Extensive work had been carried out on a new Performance system which would put all the information in one place with easy to read graphics. Officer training was currently underway.

Reports for Quarters 1 and 2 would be produced from the system in

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time for the October meeting. The Chairman stressed the need for Members to receive the papers in advance of the meeting.

There would need to be an additional meeting scheduled in for September to discuss the Constitution Review. It was a big topic and would be another one-item agenda.

It was agreed that a Special Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting would take place on 24 September 2015 at 2pm. Venue to be confirmed.

Future items would also include a look at the Council's Governance arrangements.

Members were asked to put forward suggestions.

Councillor Jermy suggested that as the Broadband upgrade list should be available in the Autumn that could be added to the work programme for the November meeting and Karen O'Kane should be invited to attend.

Councillor Stasiak suggested that the Snetterton process should also be scrutinised.

Councillor Claussen thought that Members needed to be updated on the progress of the Local Plan and the Chairman said that communities had been very successfully engaged in the Local Plan process before. He had discussed the matter with the Leader and when the technical details had been sorted and the call for sites consultation was ready it would come to Scrutiny.

The Executive Member for Growth agreed and said that the timetable was key; once that was confirmed he would propose a date for the matter to come to Scrutiny.

The Deputy Leader of the Council reminded Members that they were all welcome to attend and provide input to the Local Plan Working Group meetings.

55/15 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The next meeting would be the Special meeting on 24 September 2015 at 2pm. The venue for that would be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for an interesting meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.20 pm

CHAIRMAN