

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 17 December 2015 at 2.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr T F C Monument
Mr S H Chapman-Allen	Mr D R R Oliver
Mr P.D. Claussen (Vice-Chairman)	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr D M Crawford	Councillor C Bowes (Substitute Member)
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr H E J Clarke (Substitute Member)
Mrs S.M. Matthews	

Also Present

Mr J Newton	Mr P.J. Duigan
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs J Hollis
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr K. Martin
Mr C G Carter	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr T R Carter	Mrs L.S. Turner
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mr P R W Darby	Mr P S Wilkinson
Mr P M M Dimoglou	

In Attendance

Sarah Barsby	- Communications Manager (BDC)
Neil Campbell	- Planning Policy Manager (Capita)
Anna Graves	- Chief Executive
Robert Leigh	- Executive Manager People & Information
Helen McAleer	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Phil Mileham	- Strategic Planning Manager
Tim Mills	- Executive Manager Growth (Interim)
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Robertson	- Planning Policy Officer (Capita)
Mark Stinson	- Executive Manager Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer BDC)
Iain Withington	- Planning Policy Team Leader (Capita)

77/15 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

78/15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jermy, Stasiak and Webb. Councillor Bowes was present as Substitute for Councillor Stasiak and Councillor Clarke was present as Substitute for Councillor Jermy.

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79/15 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

80/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

81/15 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Councillors Bambridge, Borrett, C Carter, T Carter, M Chapman-Allen, Darby, Dimoglou, Duigan, Hollis, Martin, Newton, W Richmond, Turner, Wassell and Wilkinson were welcomed to the meeting.

82/15 EXECUTIVE MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Leader of the Council gave a short presentation on achievements so far and plans for the future.

There was a refreshed focus and vision set out in the four-year Corporate Plan which built on the Council's strengths for the benefit of the community. The Corporate priorities were prosperity, strong and independent communities and working with partners. The Council aimed to develop the local economy and the Meet the Buyer event had been the first step to ensuring more local procurement.

Key Select provided a better on-line system for housing applications, freeing up officer time to help those less able to help themselves.

The Transformation Programme would ensure that the right services were provided at the right time and in the right way and was the key to future-proofing the organisation. The four themes of the Transformation Programme were being looked at by individual Scrutiny Task & Finish Groups which would be involved in the whole four year project.

The Corporate Plan would be updated to take account of changes. Breckland's voice would be heard in the Devolution discussions. Work would continue to ensure that safe communities were maintained and joined-up services provided.

The consultation on the Local Plan was about to commence and the Plan would ensure that the right development was enabled in the right places and at the right time.

The Council would work to attract inward investment and would generate income from its assets. It would continue to trade through existing partnerships such as the ARP and would look for other opportunities. It would also ensure that major contracts

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provided the best value for money.

The Chairman asked about the outcomes of the Meet the Buyer event and the Chief Executive advised that two people that had attended the event were now being used to design the Council's website. Business to business contacts had been encouraged and good feedback had been received about that. Local businesses now knew that the Council was focussing locally.

Councillor S Chapman-Allen asked how the Council was lobbying to stop the loss of PCSOs in rural areas and the Leader of the Council suggested that the Commission could invite the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner to come back to another meeting.

Councillor Oliver asked if there were any 'red lines' regarding Devolution and the Leader of the Council said that at the moment having an elected Mayor was something that all the Districts were against. However, the best deals often went to organisations that had elected Mayors, so there was a need to be flexible.

Councillor Joel asked about CCTV cameras and the Executive Member for Place was able to advise that they were all working and recording and the Council had access to that information for all the towns.

Councillor R Richmond asked how the problem of the Council's housing land supply shortage could be overcome as it was adding to infrastructure problems. He asked if there was any chance of building a new settlement.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Local Plan proposed a reduction in the amount of land required. From his research, to qualify for Government funding any new settlement would have to be like a large town. There were infrastructure issues but many of them were out of the Council's area of influence.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council for his update and asked for the Presentation to be sent out with the Minutes (copy attached).

83/15 CONSTITUTION REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Executive Member Governance presented the report on the final draft Constitution. The substantive changes had been highlighted in yellow and/or were referred to in the covering report. He paid tribute to the amount of work done by the Officers and the Members of the Working Group.

The Executive Manager Governance drew attention to the key changes. He reminded Members that the review had commenced in April 2013 and the intention had been to structurally align the

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Constitution with South Holland's. This would enable easier navigation for Shared Managers, whilst retaining each Council's separate rules.

The base document was based on a model (Exari) prepared by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors, so was robust. The Exari model had been first presented to Scrutiny in 2014 and amendments incorporated. Since then there had been changes to the law, to portfolios and to the Management Structure. It had been identified that Access to Information Rules were missing and this had been addressed. The final document was less than 200 pages and about 58,000 words. An abridged version would be prepared when the Constitution was approved, for easy access for Members and Officers.

There had been 30 substantive changes and he drew attention to a number of key amendments:

- Officer Delegations – some key provisions had been included to allow the Monitoring Officer to amend delegations for staffing and statutory changes and Senior Officers were allowed to exercise each others delegations unless otherwise instructed.
- Standing Order No 5 – Questions without notice had been added
- Standing Order No 5 – it was proposed to add a point to enable the Chairman of Council to accept a new item of business at their discretion.
- Standing Orders 25 and 26 had been slightly amended on legal advice
- Standing Order No 39 – quorum of Cabinet to be 3 or half the total number, whichever is greater
- Standing Order No 42 – gave freedom for the Chairman to allow members of the public to speak – unless there were already alternative arrangements, such as for Planning Committee
- On page 144 the requirement to refer each virement to Cabinet had been removed
- Pages 160-161 – Contract Procedure Rules had been amended in accordance with new regulations and the Council's vision.

Councillor S Chapman-Allen asked who the Chief Officers were and he was advised that it was a legal definition referring to anyone that reported directly to the Chief Executive. He also asked whether the delegations on pages 95 and 96 meant those matters would no longer be determined by the General Purposes Committee. He was advised that the General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference for dealing with staffing issues remained the same and the Executive Manager Governance would clarify how the two delegations inter related after the

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meeting.

The Chairman asked about the proposed amendment to Standing Order No 5 to allow additional matters to be discussed at the Chairman's discretion. If that was done, some interested parties might not be aware and decisions could be made without the full facts.

The Executive Manager Governance explained that any such matters would be exceptional requiring an urgent decision. The Chairman pointed out that most agendas had an 'Urgent Business' standing item.

The Council Agenda (unlike other Agendas) did not presently have an item for other or urgent business. The Monitoring Officer suggested that the wording be changed to say Urgent Business rather than other business.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- (1) The draft Constitution, at Appendix A to the report, be recommended for adoption subject to the Monitoring Officer's suggested amendment to Standing Order No 5 and to the clarification of the inter-relationship of General Purposes Committee and Chief Officer delegations regarding staffing issues; and
- (2) an abridged version of the adopted Constitution be prepared by officers and circulated to members and relevant officers.

84/15 LOCAL PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Executive Member for Growth said that he was delighted to present the communications strategy for the Local Plan which was due out for public consultation on 11 January 2016. The Plan represented many years of hard work and it was important to get the communications strategy right to encourage maximum engagement by parish councils and the community. He handed over to the team.

Tim Mills the Interim Executive Manager Growth introduced Phil Mileham, Strategic Planning Manager, Neil Campbell, Planning Policy Manager, Sarah Robertson, Planning Policy Officer and Iain Withington, Planning Policy Team Leader.

The consultation plans had been amended following comments received and an updated version was tabled. It was important to engage the public as soon as possible and the proposed communications strategy met and exceeded the statutory duties. The importance of Members and parish councils in the process was recognised and separate briefings had been scheduled for them. Events in the Market Towns had been provisionally booked

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and were currently planned as drop-in events which would run from 2pm to 7pm. The importance of similar events in the rural community was recognised and a proposal for four rural events roughly based on S106 parish groupings was presented. There would also be a publicity campaign using posters and social media.

Councillor Borrett was pleased that the meetings were being arranged. However, he noted that not all villages were included in the pack of maps. It was clarified that the maps were of villages with Settlement Boundaries (SBs) as the Plan has a policy for rural areas which include reference to SBs. Any development outside SBs would be determined on a criteria based policy and those villages would not receive any allocation in the Plan.

The Chairman clarified that Members had access to the information that had been provided to Cabinet which included key settlements and Service Centre Villages. However, there was to be a rural SB review which would consider changes to those boundaries and it could appear that those villages without a SB had been discounted before the consultation. Yet on page 38 of the consultation documents it said that consideration would be given to infilling and rounding off. He did not think that made things very clear for the public.

Councillor Borrett thought that all villages should be treated the same whether they had a SB or not as the principal of having a SB had not been decided yet.

The Chairman agreed and said it had been an issue with Members for some time, as having a SB had changed the character of rural villages by enabling unacceptable development. It would be much better to remove the SB and have a criteria based policy to allocate development. As there was to be a SB review it seemed wrong to consult on defined areas.

The Interim Executive Manager Growth agreed to take those comments on board but said the consultation had to proceed if it was to meet the agreed timetable.

Councillor Oliver suggested that a compromise would be to remove the hard red line round villages with a SB and replace it with a dotted red line to show that there might be a change.

The Interim Executive Manager Growth said that there would be a review of rural SBs but in the meantime the consultation did need to reflect the current position while acknowledging the potential for change. If the review brought change it would be included in the final consultation.

Members did not agree and the Chairman suggested that more explanation was needed in the text to make it clear to the public.

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The Interim Executive Manager Growth said he was happy to do that.

The Executive Member for Place asked if it was too late for landowners to put forward sites and he was advised that they could still do so during the consultation period.

Councillor Claussen noted that due to the Council's housing land supply shortage development outside SB had to be considered and approved if sustainable. Some parish councils without SB did not want any development but were forced to accept it because of the land supply issue. Now was the time to sort that out. He asked why the proposed sessions for parish councils were drop-in and not formal.

The Planning Policy Officer explained that it was only a proposal. There would be a formal session for those parishes considering a Neighbourhood Plan, but it was felt that other parishes were more likely to have a wider range of questions, more easily dealt with at a drop-in session.

The Chairman suggested a two-stage approach with a formal meeting first followed by an informal session.

Councillor Claussen noted that in some areas separate groups were involved in the neighbourhood plan, not the parish council. The Interim Executive Manager Growth said that was a valid point and all the people that were involved would be invited.

Councillor M Chapman-Allen asked if it was up to Members to answer questions from members of the public at parish meetings. The Chairman thought that all parish councils should be given as much prior notice of the consultation as possible to allow them time to arrange meetings, etc. Members were encouraged to empower their parish councils to engage in the process.

Councillor Joel said it was important to let parishes know the dates as early as possible as they usually held their meetings at the start of the month. He asked for Members to be provided with posters so that they could raise public awareness.

The Chairman asked for posters to be sent to all Parish Clerks so that they could put them up on noticeboards.

Councillor S Chapman-Allen thought that people would struggle to understand the maps because of the red lines which were difficult to explain. The Interim Executive Manager Growth confirmed that he was committed to explaining their meaning in the consultation documents. Cabinet had already approved the documents and had delegated power to the Portfolio Holder to make minor changes. Removing the red lines was not a minor change. The

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Commission was being asked to agree the communication strategy.

The Chairman disagreed and said that the Commission was being asked to give its views on the proposal and they would be communicated to Cabinet and Council in January. If paragraph 3.67 (about the rural SB review) was not in Part 1 there would be no need for further discussion but as it was in there he felt it was a case of putting the cart before the horse.

Councillor Borrett thought it was important to be careful about language when talking about SB as some people would worry that if they were removed it would lead to development everywhere. It would need to be carefully explained otherwise feedback would be based on misunderstandings. The communication strategy needed to include clear advice. He agreed that the red line should be changed to a dotted line and thought that Officers should suggest that change to the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Oliver asked for the Portfolio Holders view, but the Deputy Leader of the Council explained that he had had to leave to attend a planning appeal. She thought it was a shame the questions had not been raised at the Cabinet meeting. She would pass the message on to the Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman asked the Communications Manager if the communications strategy included consultation with Statutory and non-Statutory consultees, such as GP practices. It was confirmed that they would be consulted. He went on to ask about adjacent areas, such as Hingham which was not in Breckland but provided medical services for Breckland residents.

The Interim Executive Manager Growth advised that NHS England and the CCGs would be consulted.

Councillor Newton was a Planning Committee member and he had never seen anything on an agenda to suggest that the NHS had been consulted. With the Council's interest in the health of its residents he felt that it should do.

The Chairman explained that there had been a previous Task & Finish Group which had looked into the issue and found that the NHS were not statutory consultees and a planning application could not be refused on grounds of insufficient medical facilities. However, the Commission had recommended to Planning that they should notify medical practices of applications for development in their area so that they could plan for growth.

Councillor Claussen asked if there was any duty to co-operate and it was confirmed that there was. Norfolk and Suffolk-wide Members' forums met quarterly and any strategic issues would be presented to them. One of the strands that they considered was

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health.

The Communications Manager was asked if she had any comments. She said it had been helpful to listen to the discussion and she had made notes and would add some things to the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

The Chairman passed on a plea from his parish which was to only receive Part 2 of the documentation (key settlements) and their own maps – not all the maps. It was not worth sending everything out to every parish council.

Councillor Bambridge noted that some parishes might want maps of their neighbouring parishes but the Chairman pointed out that they would be able to access those on-line.

The Interim Executive Manager Growth suggested that the plans should be incorporated into Part 2 and one full set should be sent to each parish, and then individual maps of their own areas could be sent separately.

The proposed groupings of parishes were clarified with meetings proposed to be held in Shropham, Mundford, Necton and North Elmham as well as the market towns. A full set of documents would be made available at each of those locations.

Two members of Bawdeswell Parish Council were in attendance and were invited to comment. They had no questions but said that they would be strongly contesting the Local Service Centre status of their village.

Members were content with the proposals subject to the amendments they had suggested.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for the good documents which had addressed many issues.

85/15 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Councillor S Chapman-Allen said that the Organisational Design T&FG had held its first meeting with the Chief Executive as their lead officer. He had been pleased with the participation.

Councillor Matthews said that the Aligning Public Services T&FG had met and been surprised that the whole of the DWP were moving into the Council Offices. At their next meeting they would be talking to County Council members about the Early Intervention Hub.

No other T&FG Chairmen were present.

86/15 HEALTH SCRUTINY (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Nothing to report.

87/15 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

None.

88/15 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 12)

None.

89/15 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The following items were added to the list of topics to be discussed:

- How we scrutinise partners
- How the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions and what it is doing for Breckland
- Duty to co-operate – how it works and how it impacts on Breckland.

90/15 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 14)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 28 January 2016 were noted.

The Chairman wished everyone a very Happy Christmas.

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The meeting closed at 4.27 pm

CHAIRMAN

WELCOME

12 MONTHS OF SUCCESS

1

Our Vision: 2015-2019

2

**‘A place of opportunity and
ambition for all’**



Our Corporate Priorities

- Developing the **local economy** to be vibrant with continued growth
- Supporting Breckland to **develop and thrive**
- Enabling stronger, more **independent communities**
- Providing the **right services**, at the **right time** and in the **right way**

‘Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth’

- Breckland met with more than **50 local providers** as part of its plans to procure more goods and services from the **local market**

4



**MEET
THE
BRECKLAND
BUYERS**

‘Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive’

Housing:

- Home Connections – offering better **online support** for applications and an improved process
- Part of **Key Select** - the new choice based online letting system



‘Enabling stronger, more independent communities’

- Dementia Awareness project: **Our Day Out**
- First local authority in UK to offer discounted and contract free Leisure Membership for carers and cared for



‘Providing the right services, at the right time and in the right way’

- Part of **transformation** programme
- **Service review**
- **10%** efficiency target
- All now programmed



Transformation – Moving Forward

- We agreed a 4 year programme to transform the council supported by an appropriate budget.
- Members have set up 4 task & finish groups to scrutinize the ‘Moving Forward’ transformation programme key themes - to make sure it delivers all the benefits expected.

- 1. Commercialisation**
 - 2. Digitalisation**
 - 3. Aligning public services**
 - 4. Organisational design**
- 

Moving Forward

Commercialisation

- Successful launch of **Breckland Bridge**, in partnership with Land Group
- Draft Budget planning will facilitate **investment /growth funds** for housing and economic prosperity and commercial returns
- Commercial property continues to perform well with **8% return** and **99% let**
- **ARP** new enforcement services established and **contributing to income**

Moving Forward

Digitalisation

- **Website** - new **content management system** to go live with refreshed/reduced content in 2016:
 - Content designed for easier viewing on **mobile devices**
 - Greater **flexibility** to support future digital online services
 - Trial improved **digital services** – Eg: garden waste Feb 2016
- Procured Capita **online payment software**
- Introduced new **performance management system** (Covalent) to more effectively monitor organisational performance
- Secured LGA funding to trial **Book and Pay** options and **Assisted Digital** in reception

Moving Forward

Aligning Public Services

- **DWP** will be moving into Elizabeth House to deliver their services from here, **transforming our face-to-face service** in
⇒ Dereham and Thetford
 - **Early intervention hubs** - to support vulnerable families and individuals through **collaborative working** - being developed
- 

Moving Forward

Organisational Design

- Shared **Management restructure** and refocus implemented, with South Holland
 - ⇒ • **Staff Forum** re-established - delivered staff values and new recognition scheme
 - LGA supporting our **Organisation Development Programme**
 - **Staff survey** action plans implemented and clear direction of travel now understood
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In a nutshell

- Making good progress on **Corporate Plan** objectives:
 - **Supporting local businesses**, through events like Meet the Buyer
 - **Encouraging growth**, through ventures like Breckland Bridge
 - **Enhancing digital services** (Eg Housing and green waste trial), by investing in technology
 - **Enabling communities**, through schemes like Our Day Out
- Improving and **redesigning services**, through transformation programme

Plus:

- Strong **draft budget position** - planning to be free of central government RSG by 2019. Balanced budget for 2016/17 plus we have the plans in place for future years
- Successfully ran a very **complex election**: District, Parish and General
- Developed a suite of **ward profiles** for newly elected members to give them key facts and figures

2016 and onwards

- Delivery of Corporate Plan and transformation
- Devolution
- Safe communities, work with operational partnership team
- Working with partners, Eg: OPE, NCC, BT and Broadband
- Re-imagining Norfolk and public health & wellbeing
- Cost shunting, re: austerity
- Local Plan adoption
- Growth: GTDP, Attleborough Development Partnership
- Inward investment for employment sites: TEP and Snetterton
- ARP: commercialisation
- Renegotiating major contracts