

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

**Held on Thursday, 21 January 2016 at 10.15 am in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr T J Ashby	Mr A.P. Joel
Mr S.G. Bambridge (Chairman)	Mr K. Martin
Mrs E J Bishop	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mrs K. Millbank
Mr R F W Brame	Mrs L.H. Monument
Mr C G Carter	Mr T F C Monument
Mr T R Carter	Mr M J Nairn
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mr J Newton
Mr S H Chapman-Allen	Mr D R R Oliver
Mr H E J Clarke	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr P.D. Claussen	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr D M Crawford	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr P R W Darby	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr P M M Dimoglou	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mr R.W. Duffield	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr M Taylor
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mrs L.S. Turner
Councillor E. Gould	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mr P.J. Hewett	Mrs A M Webb
Mrs J Hollis	Mr N.C. Wilkin
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr P S Wilkinson

In Attendance

Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Anna Graves	- Chief Executive
Julie Kennealy	- Executive Director (Commercialisation)(S151 Officer)
Helen McAleer	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Manager
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Officer
Mark Stinson	- Executive Manager Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer BDC)
Andrew Egerton-Smith	- Chairman, Independent Remuneration Panel

1/16 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/16 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bowes, Jolly, Nunn, Pettitt, and Rogers.

Action By

3/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Chairman's engagements were noted.

4/16 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Leader of the Council described his aspirations and expectations for the coming year. He reported on the following:

- Breckland Bridge – he was impressed with the progress of the Riverside project at Thetford which would be completed on time and on budget. It provided a much needed facility and would bring employment to the District. Work had also begun on residential development of 11 homes in Mileham; four of which would be affordable units.
- Local Plan – the latest iteration of the Local Plan was out to consultation with a series of events being held throughout the District. He commended the Officers that had been involved and especially commended Cllr Charles Carter, the Portfolio Holder, who had done an excellent job overseeing the Local Plan initiative.
- Corporate Plan – this would be refreshed together with underlying delivery plans to ensure that throughout 2016 Breckland continued to fulfil the promises made to residents.
- Finance – the Council was in a good financial position and would continue the effort to become independent of uncertain Government funding for the core services it currently provided.
- Transformation – Member involvement was vital in the transformation project to shape a Council that satisfied the needs of the residents as well as taking advantage of technology available. The integration of DWP was well underway which would benefit the residents who used the vital services. An Early Intervention Hub was being set up in Thetford and would allow intervention at an early stage in any developing crisis.
- Devolution – Members were reminded that they had received information on seminars being held across Norfolk and Suffolk. Some additional dates had been added.

Councillor Jermy said the Local Plan was very significant and relevant to Breckland. He asked about the potential development at RAF Barnham, which bordered the Thetford Burrell Ward, and said it would have a significant impact on the services and amenities of Thetford. The Leader said this was a recent announcement and he would consult with neighbouring authorities.

Councillor Taylor asked if the situation with parking and access at the Thetford Riverside development had been discussed with Norfolk County Council (NCC). The Leader said the Director at NCC was aware and the situation would be dealt with at a strategic level.

Councillor R Richmond commented that he had attended a recent Local Plan event to which the Town and Parishes had been invited. It was well attended, and he commended the Officers, and especially Cllr Charles Carter for their involvement in the Local Plan.

5/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

No declarations were made.

6/16 CABINET MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 6)

- a) Allocation of residual Growth Point Funding (Minute Ref: 9/16).

Councillor Jermy asked if projects that had been previously been supported under the Moving Thetford Forward Board would still receive funding. The Leader confirmed that legacy projects would not be forgotten.

Councillor Brame added that the Charles Burrell Trustees were very pleased that support had been given to them.

- b) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 5 January 2016 be adopted.

7/16 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 7)

- a) Constitution Review (Minute Ref: 83/15)

The recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny commission were received and formed part of a separate report later on the agenda.

- b) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 17 December 2015 be adopted.

8/16 PLANNING COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 8)

RESOLVED that the confirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 14 December 2015 be adopted.

9/16 APPEALS COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 9)

- a) Objection to serving of TPO (Minute Ref: 68/15)

Councillor Gilbert said he was disappointed that as a Ward Member he was not aware of this Tree Preservation Order, and therefore had not been able to input into the appeal. He asked for Members to be informed of issues occurring in their ward. The Leader said he would ensure that this issue was looked into.

Councillor Monument noted that appeals against Tree Preservation Orders would be heard at Planning Committee in future. Cllr Wilkin said he would ensure Ward Members were kept informed.

- b) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Appeals Committee meeting held on 16 December 2015 be adopted.

10/16 AUDIT COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 10)

a) Quarterly Update – Risk Management

Councillor L Monument asked for clarification on whether it was the Performance and Risk Board, or the Performance, Risk and Audit Board. It was confirmed there was one board – Performance Risk and Audit Board.

b) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 11 December 2015 be adopted.

11/16 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT - MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2016/17 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Executive Manager Governance presented the report, and introduced Mr Egerton-Smith, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel to Members.

Mr Egerton-Smith addressed the Council, advising that the Panel had been appointed by the Authority. The Panel had noted the positive culture of the Authority, and felt that the residents of Breckland received value for money.

Councillor Clarke felt that the rationale for the increase was not substantive enough. Mr Egerton-Smith replied that the Panel had benchmarked with Local Authorities surrounding Breckland and had compared workloads as well as the effectiveness of the Council.

Councillor Jermy asked for the data to compare the hours worked by Members in other Authorities; and added that Breckland was very different in the way it worked.

The Leader said the data could be seen in the outcomes. Breckland was an entrepreneurial Council and had the lowest Council Tax in the Country and this was all down to the involvement of the Members. The total increase to Members Allowances in 2016-17 budget would be 0.012% of the £63m budget, which was a small increase. Members would continue to strive to provide value for money for Breckland's residents.

Councillor Joel said that since the elections in May 2015, there were now fewer Members, with larger ward areas to support due to Boundary changes.

Councillor Jermy pointed out that the Special Responsibility Allowances were disproportionate to other Local Authorities. There was a huge discrepancy and he wanted to understand why the Remuneration Panel had made their recommendations. He suggested that Members Allowances should be reviewed similarly to Norfolk County Council, which linked to Officer increases.

Councillor Borrett said Breckland had the lowest Council Tax in the Country. The authority was Member led and he was proud of what Breckland had achieved.

Councillor Cowen commented that the Panel had interviewed him. The Panel were fully aware of the pressures the elected Members were under and commended the Panel for their engagement.

Councillor Gilbert said he would like to see the link with public sector pay increase as an agenda item at a future meeting.

Mr Egerton-Smith added that with the agreement of the Panel he had held a separate meeting with the Leader of the Council. He had been surprised by his workload and effort which fully justified the Leaders remuneration.

Councillor Sherwood was proud of Breckland. He opined that a number of Councillors were in employment and were not reimbursed for the time taken out to attend Council meetings Members' allowances helped to compensate for this. The Leader and Cabinet Members also spent a large amount of time reading documents in their own time in advance of meetings.

Councillor Smith said the Council was in a sound financial position thanks to hard work. He also added that a higher rate allowance enabled those that were in employment to participate as Councillors.

Councillor Clarke said he fully appreciated the commitment of the Councillors, and suggested that the times of the meetings needed to be considered in order to recruit Councillors.

The Executive Manager Governance confirmed that Council must make a decision having regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel. Members could reach a decision that differed from the recommendations, so long as they justified that, but could not change the mechanism; the Independent Remuneration Panel had to be involved.

Councillor Jermy proposed an alternative recommendation:

That the Independent Remuneration Panel consider the advantages and disadvantages of linking future allowances to public sector pay.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Clarke, but not supported by members.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the new scheme be effective from 1 April 2016 until 31 March 2017.
- 2) the Basic Allowance for all Breckland Council Members is increased by 1.9% (rounded up) to £5300 per annum.
- 3) the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Commission and the Chairman of the Planning Committee is increased to £11,260 per annum.
- 4) the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Council is increased to £5300 per annum.
- 5) the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee is amended to £245 per meeting.
- 6) the remainder of the Special Responsibility Allowances are increased by 1.9%.(rounded up)
- 7) remainder of the Allowances remain unchanged.

12/16 INDEPENDENT PERSON PROTOCOL (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The Executive Manager Governance presented the report of the Executive Director – Strategy and Governance, which sought approval of an Independent Person Protocol as part of the Council's Standards framework.

RESOLVED that the Independent Person Protocol be adopted and circulated to all District Councillors and Parish Councils.

13/16 BRECKLAND COUNCIL CONSTITUTION REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Chairman thanked everyone who had been involved with the Constitution project. The Executive Manager Governance also passed his thanks on to Officers and Members who had been involved in the piece of work.

The amendments to the Constitution addressed changes in law and practice and had been designed to reflect joint working with South Holland District Council.

Certain parts of the old Constitution would no longer form part of the Constitution, but would nevertheless remain in force (such as the Planning protocol).

It was intended that a Standing Item be added to the Council agenda to pick up on minor changes to the Constitution and that a mini-review would be carried out on an annual basis.

Councillor Cowen commended the Officers for the piece of work and clarified amendments proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission had been incorporated.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The draft Constitution be adopted;
- 2) An abridged version of the adopted Constitution be prepared by Officers and circulated to Members and relevant Officers.

14/16 UNIVERSAL CREDIT ROLLOUT UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 14)

Councillor Clarke asked for clarification on the detail of the number of staff affected. The Executive Manager Commercialisation said the number of staff affected in Breckland was circa 88, however it was still unclear and the Council would work to reduce the numbers affected.

Councillor Newton asked for assurances that staff would be looked after, particularly with training and development.

The Leader added that it was always the Council's priority to look after the staff.

RESOLVED that :

- 1) Members note the impact and associated risks to services following the recent Universal Credit announcement in December 2015, and the impact on future service provision, budget and resourcing levels.
- 2) To endorse the approach of the joint committee in seeking to mitigate reductions in funding through seeking to generate income and efficiencies

through trading and other opportunities.

Action By

15/16 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 15)

Outside Body Appointment

Councillor Ashby is appointed to the Greater Attleborough Partnership.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN