

Breckland Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 Progress and Key Achievements 2016-17

Executive Summary

Introduction

Welcome to the Corporate Plan progress and key achievements update for Breckland Council for the period 1 October 2016 to 31 January 2017. The Corporate Plan runs for four years from 2015 to 2019 and was approved by the Council on 26 February 2015 to cover four priorities:-

- 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
- Enabling stronger, more independent communities

The critical activities to deliver these priorities were refreshed at the beginning of this year to include the approved 'Moving forward' programme, the approved Open for Business Action Plan and key projects which are being developed to meet the Council's vision of 'Breckland: a place where people and business can thrive'.

Executive Summary Key Achievements

Garden Waste Scheme – Book and Pay On-Line

The Council recognises that residents want to be able to access services at their convenience. To support this Book and Pay online payments have been introduced for existing and new customers who subscribe to the Garden Waste Collection scheme.

We currently have 20,500 subscribers using our garden waste collection service. Since the commencement of online payment options in April, 5724 payments have been processed online; 15% of these are new subscribers and 85% are renewals. During this period 842 new subscriptions joined the service, 46% of these paid online. 4882 (37%) renewed their subscription by paying online. Currently only debit card payments can be taken online, but a credit card option is being developed and we are working to develop a direct debit option. The online forms and renewal letters have also been reviewed to improve the customer experience.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way'.

Increase in Leisure Participation

The Council supports the health and wellbeing of residents by providing Leisure Centres in Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham and Thetford in partnership with Parkwood Leisure. An

increase in overall participation of 6.3% has been achieved compared to the same period last year. This represents an increase of 4,605 participants.

This supports the Corporate Priorities of 'Enabling stronger, more independent communities' and 'Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive'.

'Our Day Out' Programme

Raising awareness of dementia and the impact it has on our residents is important to the Council. 'Our Day Out' is a programme created by the Council and delivered in partnership with Creative Arts East. The project aims to share experiences and memories between people with early to mid-stage dementia and their carers by providing stimulating arts and cultural activities. The programme delivers a number of positive activities including dancing, day visits, and music sessions at groups based in Dereham, Watton and Attleborough. 'Our Day Out' has been running since Spring 2015, and has delivered activities for 407 attendees with an average of 27 people a month and 9 participants per group.

The programme has received positive feedback from those who attended the sessions with 94% saying that they felt less isolated thinking the programme is important as it helps them to socialise and enjoy the company of others. Everyone stated that they feel more confident in trying out new experiences as a result which is further evidenced by some of the comments received:-

- ✓ "My husband really enjoys his 'our day out' and talks about it at home. Thank you all very much for what you organise for us, it is very much appreciated"
- ✓ "These sessions are essential to our wellbeing"
- ✓ "Brilliant. Dad and I have found the sessions a great help, good fun and something to look forward to."
- ✓ "Been given a new life" and feels "less irritable" when she is out of the house.
- ✓ "...you don't get judged. Everyone is in the same position, so you can feel totally relaxed.....It really lifts you up!"

As a result of the success of the programme and the feedback received, Creative Arts East have secured funding amounting to just over £230,000 to continue 'Our Day Out' for a further 3 years from the 'Spirit of 2012' trust fund. This will also allow the programme to be expanded to include sessions in Thetford and to increase the frequency of these sessions from monthly to fortnightly. In addition, Creative Arts East will use some of the funding to replicate the programme in North Norfolk.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Enabling stronger, more independent communities'.

ARP Enforcement Agency

The Council has a duty to collect Council Tax and had previously used private bailiffs to recover arrears. The costs incurred by the Council were repaid by the debtor, which further increased the debt for people already in financial difficulties arrears. In 2015 the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) created an Enforcement Agency to address cases of significant Council Tax arrears for the partnership authorities. Since establishment at the end of July 2015, the ARP Enforcement Agency has been successful in collecting over £1.1m of arrears. As a result of this

success, the ARP Operational Improvement Board has sought approval to expand the Enforcement Agency to councils outside the partnership and to include other types of debt recovery and this was agreed at the Council's General Purposes Committee on 25 May 2016. Since the agreement, the Enforcement Agency has been expanded to include South Norfolk District Council with services that commenced for them in November 2016.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way'.

Procurement Processes Review

To ensure the Council achieves the best value from the goods and services they purchase the Council's procurement processes have been reviewed. As a result of the review, an insurance policy, which was held as part of a long term agreement with an annual spend of £257,000, was re-tendered with the cover being split into separate lots. This resulted in a saving of £232,000 over a three year period being achieved.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way'.

Digital Passport

A Digital Passport training programme for has been developed and launched to ensure the workforce is able to support working and delivering services in a digital way. There are a series of seven modules which need to be completed by all staff over the next 12 months. A group of 'Digital Champions' has been established to support the programme; answer any digital questions and support suggestions and ideas which may be raised by the workforce.

The first two modules were launched in August and these included an online video to increase understanding the benefits of digitalisation, why the Council has a digital vision and an online tutorial on Social Media. The third module was launched in November and includes an interactive workshop to channel digital thinking from the customer's perspective.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way'.

Thetford Riverside Development

The Breckland Bridge partnership has completed the Riverside Development at Thetford. This has been delivered on time and within budget and has resulted in the major regeneration of a key site in the town centre. The Council invested £8m in the development of the site which includes 5 food and retail units, 62 hotel bedrooms, 3 cinema screens and will result in 75 new jobs being created.

The responsibility for letting the units at the Development now passes to the Council and the majority of units are now let generating additional income for the Council through rents and Business Rates.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive'.

Thetford Enterprise Park (TEP) and Snetterton Heath Employment Sites

The Council is working in partnership with Pigeon Investment Management, to progress delivery of the infrastructure to develop Thetford Enterprise Park (which is included in the planned A11 Technology Corridor). This will enable businesses to expand, attract higher value industries and bring quality jobs to the district. The Council is working with partners to seek funding for the necessary infrastructure improvements which allow the site to be developed. The bid for £1.8m funding from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for a roundabout to provide access to the TEP has been successful and this will be delivered in the next 2 years. Work continues to secure funding for the other major infrastructure projects. This will assist in the development of the site to make it ready for potential technology-based companies and creating up to 2,000 new jobs.

A Master Plan aimed at getting to a point where the TEP can be marketed to prospective developers by 2017/18 is under development. This included getting the site adopted as a key site for the East's prospectus at MIPIM UK (market of international real estate professionals) in October 2016.

The option for the Electricity Upgrade at the Snetterton Heath Employment Sites was secured until October 2016 and a bid for monies has been submitted to the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This has been successful resulting in funding of £2.3m being received which together with private and public sector investment will result in the £3m scheme to upgrade the electricity power supply and enable to expansion of industrial activity to attract new business and new jobs to the sites.

The major Snetterton landowners have formed consortium and are meeting with the Council on a regular basis with the aim of co-ordinating the marketing and assisting in the project planning.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth'.

Website Review

As part of the ongoing programme to enable residents, businesses and partners to do more on-line and at a time and place that's convenient to the, the Council's website has been transferred to a new platform. The new platform allows the website to be accessed on a tablet or phone, as well as a pc or laptop, offers an improved search function and enables customers to add exact locations when submitting a form so the Council can respond as quickly and efficiently as possible. Work is continuing on a new iteration of the Council website which will feature a more modern design and improved navigation that focuses on the needs of residents and local businesses.

Further functionality is being developed including the ability to make payments by credit card (in addition to debit card), apply for licences online and registering a user profile which will allow the content to be made relevant to the customer and pre-populate forms with their contact details.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way'.

Breckland Fit Families

The 'Breckland Fit Families' project was funded by the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board and was overseen by Public Health. The project was aimed at targeting and facilitating healthy behaviour change in Reception aged children and their families in areas of Breckland that had been identified by the National Child Measurement Program (NCMP) as having high levels of Reception age children at risk of developing weight-related illness in later life.

The project engaged 360 families across 4 reception classes at Infant schools in Thetford, Watton, Carbrooke and Swaffham, and used a combination of 6 x 1 hour sessions in-school parent and child activity session interventions, family homework workbooks, and social media mentoring and challenges to encourage and educate families in the benefits of taking more exercise and eating a more balanced diet.

The success of the project attracted interest from the University of East Anglia (UEA) who have worked with Breckland since April 2016 and a research study to clinically assess the project's impact has been completed with the findings delivered to the Executive Management Team and Strategy Board.

The UEA also undertook an evaluation of the project impact while it was being delivered. Headlines from the evaluation reveal that the project had a significant positive impact on the health behaviours of both the children and parents engaged:

- *'This intervention is associated with positive changes in the diets of the children involved'*
- *'It is also associated with an increase in parental moderate physical activity'*
- *'There were significant increases in the 'Healthy Eating Score' for the intervention group.'*
- *'The areas of increased understanding/awareness apparent were around the amount of sugar in foods, portion sizes, the necessity of fruits and vegetables of different colours, and the balance of different food types for younger children'*
- *'the intervention gave parents a sense of increased influence on their children regarding the health messages covered by the intervention.... children were more receptive to the parents in terms of the health messages and this was because they had also understood and assimilated them'*

The next steps are for the future delivery of the project to be considered and an expression of interest bid for Sport England funding has been launched with the hopes of putting forward a formal bid sometime in the near future to help support the "Fit Families" initiative going forward.

This supports the Corporate Priority of 'Enabling stronger, more independent communities'.

Reducing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Reducing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour is about helping communities to feel safe in the district and supports the delivery of the following Critical Activities:

- CA05 Work with our partners to reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and protect the community and environment
- CA06 Work together with partners and local communities to improve the quality of public spaces to be cleaner, greener and safe

The Breckland Operational Partnership Team (BOPT) was established in 2010 to focus on preventing and addressing anti-social behaviour in the district. The partnership is made up of Breckland Council and Norfolk Constabulary officers and is based in the Council offices at Elizabeth House in Dereham. The partnership has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour year on year resulting in reported instances reducing by over a half since 2010.

Key areas of work include supporting vulnerable victims and working with partners at the earliest opportunity where anti-social behaviour has been identified, to prevent any further escalation. Due to the success the early intervention work, the powers and tools available under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, have not as yet been used but are available for when enforcement becomes the only option.

Anti-social behaviour levels in Breckland continue to fall with only 622 calls received regarding anti-social behaviour in the period October-December 2016 which is the lowest figure in the last year. The number of new cases referred to the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team for the same period where the lowest figures seen for the last two years with only 8 new cases.

In terms of other preventative work, the Council continues to work with partners to deliver a programme of school interventions to educate young children around the impact and consequences of anti-social behaviour. The timing of these interventions fits in with the requirements of the national curriculum and as a result they are usually scheduled to take place in the second half of the year.

'Moving Forward' Transformation Programme

Through a programme of projects that are set to make significant savings for the authority the 'Moving Forward' Programme is about changing the way the Council delivers Services to meet the future needs of residents and businesses and also support the delivery of the following Critical Activity:

- CA08 Deliver the transformation programme to drive through efficiencies and achieve resilience

The 'Moving Forward' programme is now in its second year, with the four work streams – Digitalisation, Commercialisation, Organisational Design and Aligning Public Services. The key reasons for transforming Breckland Council are:

- To continue to be a forward looking Council leading the way, looking to continuously improve and be capable of delivering services in different ways as new technologies and ways of working emerge
- To be rewarded for growing and improving the local area for its residents by delivering housing, infrastructure, business and employment in order to make it a vibrant place where people want to live and businesses want to be situated
- To achieve a balanced budget and achieve financial independence from Central Government funding whilst improving the Services and minimising the impact on residents by saving money and increasing income

Since the programme was approved, a number of projects have started and the governance of the programme has been developed and implemented. The programme is expected to deliver savings and income to the value of £6,745,996.

The actual savings and income achieved to the end of the third quarter have been captured, together with the overall savings and income this is projected to provide up to the end of the 2019/20 financial year:-

Transformation Theme	Savings and Income Achieved in Current Year (2016/17)*	Savings and Income projected up to the end of 2019/20**
Digitalisation	£36,000	£36,240
Commercialisation	£481,000	£1,671,025
Organisational Design	£354,000	£908,388
Aligning Public Services	£41,000	£80,720
Other	£11,000	£11,420
Total	£923,000	£2,707,793

*Savings and income based on what has already been achieved

** Projected savings and income based on what has already been achieved

Further savings and income will be identified as part of the full transformation programme to reach the target amount of £6,745,996.

Aligning Public Services

Aligning Public Services is about exploring and developing opportunities to co-locate public sector organisations to deliver a 'one stop shop' for customers and ensuring value for money is achieved for residents and the wider public purse. This supports the delivery of the following Critical Activities:

- CA08 Deliver the transformation programme to drive through efficiencies and achieve resilience
- CA18 Collaboration with partners to meet our corporate priorities

To date the Council has worked in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) based in Dereham, to co-locate in Elizabeth House in Dereham with a shared reception area. It has been identified that many residents needing to access DWP services, also need to access Council services so this allows residents to access both organisations in one place. This has released office space in the town centre for business use, and also means that residents accessing DWP services can park out of the town centre.

The next stage is to develop co-location opportunities at the Council offices at Breckland House in Thetford. This plan is advancing well with a view to DWP being co-located in Thetford by June/July 2017.

Commercialisation

Commercialisation is about developing the Council to operate in a business-like manner and create opportunities for local businesses. This supports the delivery of the following Critical Activities:

- CA09 Develop our commercial approach in a consistent way to secure our financial position by exploring opportunities to increase income
- CA10 Develop our organisation to be business ready, community focused and a partner of choice

A number of activities and opportunities are currently being explored:

- A Return on Investment (RoI) Fund has been established aimed at increasing the financial return on investments. One project currently being developed to contribute to this is the investment in market rented housing, to meet community need and deliver commercial potential. Market research has been commissioned to understand the market opportunity for investment in the private rented sector which will help the Council develop an investment/acquisition strategy to potentially take this work forward.
- The Council's Human Resources Team have traded their service to generate additional income. In the first quarter of this financial year, they provided the payroll for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections and EU Referendum for East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) and South Holland District Council (SHDC), generating £10,000 of income.

A comprehensive review of the Council's procurement process has been undertaken and a new Strategic Commissioning Intentions have been developed. The goal of this has been to encourage a more commercial approach to contracting and make opportunities more accessible to local business. To support this, ensure that the best value is obtained, and to meet legal obligations about delivering online tendering (E-tendering) by April 2017, an electronic procurement system (in-Tend) has been implemented and went live in October 2016.

The benefits of the shared working relationship between Breckland and South Holland District Councils are also beginning to be realised from a commissioning standpoint. Recent work to jointly procure Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessments (GTNA) and research into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) highlighted opportunities to make efficiencies in the project workload where there was duplication in costs of similar work, which resulted in savings to both Councils in the overall costs of the studies. It is expected that future projects and the rationalisation of contracts between the two authorities, where appropriate, will deliver similar savings and efficiencies.

Early Help Hubs

The Early Help Hubs aim to work together with partners to provide an early intervention approach to ensure a better quality of service for children, young people and families in Breckland. This supports the delivery of the following Critical Activities:

- CA03 Adopt an integrated approach to area and place based development to deliver significant growth with full community involvement
- CA19 Work with current and new partners to deliver services that improve the opportunities for vulnerable residents and families with complex needs
- CA20 Lead and support the Breckland Health and Wellbeing Partnership to address key local health, care and wellbeing issues
- CA22 Work together with partners and local communities to improve the quality of public spaces to be cleaner, greener and safe

An Early Help Hub has been developed in Thetford with a number of key partners including Children's Services, Norfolk Constabulary and Flagship Housing.

The Hub in Thetford is now fully operational. The Hub is modelled on the existing Early Help Hubs in the County meaning that all processes and documentation are already in place.

This partnership approach has raised awareness of the role of existing Community Capacity Officers who work with communities, in particular schools, to support them to deal with issues themselves to reduce the number of referrals needing to be escalated to the Hub.

Work has commenced to develop a second Hub which will be located in Dereham.

Housing and Homelessness

This supports the delivery of the following Critical Activities:

- CA02 Work towards the delivery and maintenance of a 5 year housing supply
- CA21 Enable the effective planning and delivery of housing solutions to meet local needs

The Council is continuing work with Registered Providers (RPs) to attract funding into the district. A list of the affordable housing due to be developed has been created, and at least 100 affordable homes are in the pipeline resulting from direct investment from the Council. Most notably, the delivery of 64 homes across two sites in Breckland by using £180k in Section 106 funds is included in the pipeline together with 34 new homes in Narborough through Flagship.

The Council has submitted an expression of interest for 14 sites in a bid for funding under the HCA 'Starter Homes: unlocking the land' fund which is aimed at supporting an increase in the availability of suitable land for starter home developments so that can then be built by developers by 2020. The deadline for submitting expressions of interest has been extended to 31 December 2016 with the results being available in the fourth quarter.

The HCA Home Building Fund was launched on 4 October 2016 and is aimed at supporting housing growth and homebuilding. The Council is actively promoting this with developers to encourage and accelerate housing development schemes.

To support those needing housing across the district the Council operates 'Breckland Key Select'. This allows people who are on the housing register to apply for the social and affordable private rented housing available.

One way of increasing the amount of housing available across the district is to ensure that long term empty properties are kept to a minimum. The Council recognises that there can be unavoidable circumstances when a property remains empty for some time, such as the extreme state of disrepair or those where Probate needs to be approved before they can be sold. To date this year the total number of empty properties in Breckland has reduced to 508