

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 19 December 2019 at 10.00 am in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr D. R. R. Oliver (Chairman)	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs L.S. Turner (Vice-Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr T. Birt	Mr I. Martin
Miss H. Bushell	Mr D. Wickerson
Mr F. Eagle	Mrs H, Crane (Substitute Member)
Mr T. J. Jermy	

Also Present

Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mr P.D. Claussen
Mr P. Morton	

In Attendance

Ross Bangs	- Corporate Innovation, Change & Performance Manager (shared)
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Christine Marshall	- Executive Director Commercialisation (S151 Officer)
Ryan Pack	- Graduate Trainee
Ruth Tudge	- Democratic Services Officer

97/19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

98/19 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

An apology was received from Councillor Mike Nairn. Councillor Helen Crane was in attendance as his substitute.

99/19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

100/19 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

101/19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

102/19 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

None.

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103/19 QUARTER 2 2019-20 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT

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The Executive Member for Governance, Councillor Paul Claussen, introduced the report highlighting for Members' information main areas of concern, predominantly the Contact Centre. He explained a new Customer Experience Manager had recently been employed to understand issues faced and plan a way forward. On the whole the Performance Report was doing well although he felt there was still work to be done on the presentation, profiling and statistics and invited the Chairman to meet with him in the New Year to have some time to discuss the report and look at possible improvement on ways of measuring and presenting the figures.

Councillor Martin voiced concerns over the Contact Centre report, the target and figures revealed that something was going wrong rapidly and indicated an urgent need to improve. Members agreed the report clearly showed issues, and were confused with wait times and abandoned rate figures and thought communication could be improved to educate the public as it was felt customers were unsure which avenue of communication to use and who to contact to get issues resolved.

The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager, Ross Bangs, agreed this was the fourth quarter that the Contact Centre figures showed a need to improve stating the Corporate Improvement Team had been commissioned to carry out a deep dive analysis of the team and would to bring the results back to the Scrutiny Commission.

Councillor Turner suggested over the Breckland area, demographics of the population had evolved, the living age had increased, and there had been an increase of dementia, disabilities and mental health issues, and as part of the deep dive suggested this be taken into account with the resources available.

The Chairman proposed, if, after the proposed work the next quarter report was still in the red it may be something the Scrutiny Commission should look into further.

Members referred to the Environmental and Community figures, fly tipping improved but recycling was low at 13 percent. Councillor Kiddle-Morris also queried the number of fly tip incidents in the last 4 quarters, statistics were showing a reduction but no clear reason why. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager would analyse the information and provide a breakdown and include this in the next report.

Housing and Homelessness figures also revealed issues, the figures showed over 20% homeless for reasons unidentified. Councillor Wickerson also voiced his concerns over homelessness which was a major topic Nationwide with budget spent on hotels and bed and breakfast. Now with dedicated officer resource allocated to getting empty properties back in use Members asked if this analysis could be included, with a breakdown, in the next report.

Councillor Martin also noted that staff turnover appeared low yet it was projected to rise with no clear indicator as to why.

Streetlights were also an issue with repairs not being carried out to a

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satisfactory timescale and felt this could be a failure in contract obligation. Customers were unclear where to report issues to. Councillor Jermy asked if streetlight repairs could be included in the quarterly report to monitor the contract. The Chairman suggested where Breckland had large contracts with any service providers it would be useful to track if there were breaches.

Councillor Kybird queried the percentage derived from the economic and growth indicators was confusing and some of the percentage calculations were inconsistent. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager would investigate this.

The Chairman asked for a percentage yield on commercial properties, based on the fair value of the property holdings that Breckland rent out, to be included on the next report which would show if the tax payer was getting value for money out of the commercial property portfolio. Councillor Kybird asked if energy performance statistics could also be included. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager agreed to produce the figures as a one off for the Commission.

Councillor Birt queried website visitors, Facebook and Twitter, how it was measured and whether it was an accurate and current method. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager would take this back to the digital team who had the expertise.

Councillor Birt voiced concerns over the statistics on missed bins and how this was measured as it wasn't clear. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager would re-clarify with the service for a full breakdown.

With Freedom of Information statistics Councillor Birt suggested it might be better to have a response time histogram to see whether there was any clustering and make it clear early on if there were any timing issues. Councillor Claussen responded to say they were currently looking in to the Freedom of Information requests to see where they came from, and what was being asked for to see if there was any pattern on the requests. The Chairman added that it was unacceptable for the figure to be below 100 percent unless advised of an extension and the reason why.

The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager thanked Members for their comments stating it was an ever evolving document and important it works and was happy to work with Members to improve it as much as possible to show the exact figures needed in order that the Commission could scrutinise in the right areas.

Councillor Turner suggested once members had viewed the quarterly report, if they had any queries they should email the Corporate Improvement Performance Manager with any issues prior to the meeting so that the team could investigate and come to the meeting with the information which could produce better debate.

The Chairman asked if anyone had any constructive ideas regarding the formatting or presentation of the report, they email him direct and he would liaise with the Corporate Improvement Performance Manager and look at appropriate changes together.

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104/19 DRAFT BUDGET SETTING, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Executive Director Commercialisation, Christine Marshall, introduced the report explaining key areas stating Breckland Council were in a period of unprecedented change and that the level of estimates and assumptions made far exceeded those done previously for a variety of reasons. The Executive Director Commercialisation went on to say the budget had been based on some fairly major assumptions, if the assumptions changed the position could improve or worsen so a mid-case position had been taken in terms of how the budget had been set using the best modelling available. What the budget did show was that Breckland Council was currently asset rich however the revenue position was much tighter.

Members of the Commission had previously been invited, to a briefing on the draft budget by the Executive Member for Finance and Growth which had enabled an in depth explanation and discussion prior to this report.

Members had further questions on the methodology surrounding the estimates and assumptions along with environmental, carbon and social implications, how these were measured and the understanding of recognising what the implications might be along with how forward predictions were made and identifying risks involved.

In summary Members were appreciative of the hard work that had been put into the draft budget, understanding pressures, particularly around homelessness, pensions and business rates and felt at this time, with current pressures, it was a prudent report.

The Executive Director Commercialisation went on to explain the recommendations of the report, with the next steps being out to consultation and the report would be taken through due process in February which would be Cabinet and then Full Council.

105/19 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Kybird informed Members he had received the Norfolk Health Overview Scrutiny Committee briefing on current issues within the NHS which he would forward on to Members in due course.

106/19 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)

None.

107/19 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)

None.

108/19 WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Clarke highlighted the Flagship Plus item was no longer on the work programme, and asked for it to be re-instated as it may bring in other areas of issue such as empty properties and homeless issues.

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Councillor Turner agreed stating that due to work undertaken with Flagship this topic should be included and suggested all Housing Associations within the Breckland district be invited to present to the Commission.

Councillor Birt proposed that the IT infrastructure should be considered by the Commission following on from the recent IT failure. It had significant impact for Officers, Members and residents, to look at the robustness of the equipment, and the contingency procedures in place. Councillor Birt also suggested the quality of the data that was being produced and usability for residents should be considered.

The Chairman agreed that for 2020 IT was an important issue that the Commission should scrutinise and proposed to add IT Resilience and Security to the Work Programme and following on from that the broader points on usability and customer interactions in a subsequent calendar year.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris mentioned in paragraph 3.2 of the Quarterly Report, an area requiring improvement, was on the number of empty properties brought back into use, now with dedicated officer resource allocated to tackle legalities and the problems surrounding this. He asked if a report could be brought to the Commission in 6 months' time to gauge how this work was progressing and see if this was a valuable resource, suggesting this be added to the Work Programme.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris also asked if Development in Rural areas could be re-instated to the Work Programme. The Chairman explained it had been moved to a future item whilst other work, involving the Local Plan was being carried out. It was agreed it should be added to a future meeting as there were rural areas to be looked at that were not involved in the Local Plan.

109/19 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 6th February 2020 at 10:00am in the Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am

CHAIRMAN