

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held on Tuesday, 9 February 2021 at 10.00 am

This meeting is in line with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

PRESENT

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

Also Present

Mr R. Atterwill	Mr P. Morton
Councillor M. Chapman-allen	Mr P.S. Wilkinson
Mr S. H. Chapman-Allen	Mr S.G. Bambridge
Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mrs S. E. Suggitt
Mr P. D. Claussen	Mrs A. M. Webb
Mrs H Crane	

In Attendance

Nathan Elvery	- Head of Paid Service
Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer BDC)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Ruth Tudge	- Democratic Services Officer

16/21 MINUTES

Councillor Birt raised a concern in respect of the restricted Minutes and the discussion that had taken place with the Executive Manager for Governance at the previous meeting about allowing some of the information being disclosed to the press and public.

In response, the Chairman advised that the Minutes had remained restricted as voted by Members of the Commission at that meeting. All Members had access to the restricted Minutes but as far as the public was concerned, under the Freedom of Information Act, the Legal Officer had the authority to determine what information could be released. Information was then provided to Council Birt about how he could appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if he remained dissatisfied with the outcome.

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Councillor Birt agreed to follow the suggested course of action, and in the meantime, would abstain from agreeing the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021.

Subject to the above the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

17/21 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

An apology had been received from Councillor Nairn.

18/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

19/21 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

20/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

21/21 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed all non-Members to the meeting.

22/21 INTEGRATED SHARED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW – PREFERRED OPTION FOR BRECKLAND AND SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCILS.

The Head of Paid Service and Strategic Advisor, Nathan Elvery, presented the report.

The Integrated Shared Management Team and the joint working arrangement between Breckland District Council and South Holland District Council had been in place for nearly a decade and the partnership had been successful in terms of delivering improved outcomes for local communities and making substantial savings for both organisations.

There had been three reasons behind the commissioning of the review. In October 2020, following the departure of the Chief Executive, both Leaders had agreed that now would be a good time to review the Strategic Partnership. The Joint Strategy Board had reviewed the arrangements in 2015 and it was good practice to review such an arrangement every five years. Additionally, since COVID-19 both Councils had been working on a place-based way of operation to ensure the response to communities had been as effective as possible. Furthermore, it was also felt, as both Councils sat geographically within different counties, it would be a good time to review the situation in line with current Government planned Local Government re-organisation.

The review would be delivered in three stages - to recommend a preferred option, to develop a business case for the preferred option,

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and to implement that business case for the preferred option.

The report evaluated four available options; to remain 'As is', to improve the existing partnership, to continue as a Standalone Authority, or to form a New Local Strategic Partnership. All options had been evaluated with a summary of the options evaluation and ranking detailed in the report with reasons for the recommendations. For both Councils the preferred option had been to form a New Local Strategic Partnership.

The Head of Paid Service felt that after achieving substantial savings as well as the knowledge and wisdom that had been gained over the last ten years working in joint partnership, this would be a natural evolution for both organisations.

Councillor Birt felt that it would be a sensible move to part with South Holland at this time, he said that the geographical distance of being 54 miles apart was a serious problem with the carbon footprint in a climate emergency. However, he felt that the evidence in the report was insufficient and that the calculations were not substantial enough to balance the recommendations and also felt that it would be unreasonable to evaluate the option of a New Partnership when there was no evidence to build a calculation on the unknown. However, he agreed that it was the right time to end the partnership.

The Head of Paid Service explained in detail how they had arrived at the evaluation methodology and had considered and analysed the data and quantified calculations. He added that in terms of assessing the New Local Strategic Partnership or Stand-Alone options, this would prove difficult without a business case; therefore, it had been evaluated on which opportunities might be available to the authority moving forward, if it was to forge a new partnership with a new district within the same county region based on the previous success of the existing partnership and case studies which existed across the local government sector.

Councillor Kybird stated there was not a great deal of difference between the Stand-Alone option and forming a New Local Strategic Partnership but felt that both options should be investigated further. Councillor Martin agreed that the Stand-Alone option should be seriously considered but set out with the risks and the negatives as if there was not a second option on the table. He felt that the Stand-Alone option needed to prove viable to be confident that Breckland Council continued to be the effective organisation that it currently was and be as robust as it could be until the right opportunity came along.

Members considered the options available and the four recommendations to Full Council as listed in the report were noted.

23/21 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting scheduled for 4 March 2021 at 10am were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.50 am

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CHAIRMAN