

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**COUNCIL**

**Held on Thursday, 25 February 2021 at 10.00 am**

**Virtual meeting via Zoom**

**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**

Cllr Roy Brame (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Paul Hewett
Cllr Tristan Ashby	Cllr Jane James
Cllr Stephen Askew	Cllr Terry Jermy
Cllr Roger Atterwill	Cllr Tina Kiddell
Cllr Gordon Bambridge	Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Cllr Timothy Birt	Cllr Robert Kybird
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cllr Ian Martin
Cllr Claire Bowes	Cllr Keith Martin
Cllr Mike Brindle	Cllr Linda Monument
Cllr Hilary Bushell	Cllr Philip Morton
Cllr Marion Chapman-Allen	Cllr Mike Nairn
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Cllr William Nunn
Cllr Ed Colman	Cllr Rhodri Oliver
Cllr Harry Clarke	Cllr Mark Robinson
Cllr Paul Claussen	Cllr Ian Sherwood
Cllr Philip Cowen	Cllr Sarah Suggitt
Cllr Helen Crane	Cllr Taila Taylor
Cllr Susan Dowling	Cllr Stuart Terry
Cllr Phillip Duigan	Cllr Alison Webb
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cllr David Wickerson
Cllr Keith Gilbert	Cllr Nigel Wilkin
Cllr Kay Grey	Cllr Peter Wilkinson
Cllr Chris Harvey	

**In Attendance**

Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place
Nathan Elvery	- Head of Paid Service
Sarah Barsby	- Executive Manager for Information
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Jason Cole	- Executive Manager People & Innovation
Gill Duffy	- Housing Manager
Neil Fordham	- Payroll and Reward Manager
Stephen James	- Communities & Environmental Services Manager
Ryan Pack	- Innovation and Change Business Partner
Greg Pearson	- Senior Policy Advisor
Mark Stinson	- Executive Manager Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer BDC)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

**Vice-Chairman in the Chair**

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Lynda Turner had sent her apologies.

Councillor Brame, the Vice-Chairman in the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and read aloud the protocol for the meeting.

**15/21 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lynda Turner, Chairman of the Council, and Councillors Carter, Dale and Duffield.

**16/21 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

**17/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None declared.

**18/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None.

**19/21 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

The Leader was delighted to speak to Members so soon after the Prime Minister's (PM's) latest announcement in respect of his road map and his plans for getting England out of lockdown over the next few months.

He had welcomed the PM's proposals that would help people in Breckland and across the Country to gradually return to, what was hoped to be, a normal life, and in time seeing the re-opening of High Streets across all five of Breckland's market towns including many other rural businesses that had all been doing a sterling job through these most challenging times.

This, coupled with the rollout of the Covid vaccine programme, meant that life was starting to look a little brighter. Members and residents across the District had been immensely grateful to the National Health Service, the Armed Forces and all the other volunteers at the vaccination centres across the County.

Throughout the pandemic, Breckland Council's foremost priority had been to protect the lives and livelihoods of residents and businesses across the District and this would continue.

Breckland Council had distributed over £40m in grants to businesses across the District to help them through this pandemic. This included £2m to over 1,000 local businesses from the Council's own local discretionary support grant funding pot and, in light of the PM's announcement, further guidance on any future support was awaited but once received, local businesses would be provided with further support over the coming weeks and months.

In the interim, support was still being provided to Breckland's residents for those in financial hardship, helping them with food and supermarket on-line delivery slots.

Over £60k had been provided thus far and coupled with Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Community Foundation those in need were receiving the required and relevant support.

The Leader was also pleased to announce that his future social programme would soon be underway, this would be looking at employability workshops to help highlight how young people and young carers could be transferred into job settings and to ensure that they had access to much needed peer support. This would be branded under the Council's 'Young Carers Extra Support' programme that would sit under the 'Vulnerability' programme which had been launched 12 months ago with £1m funding from this Council.

Further to the PM's announcements, the Senior Management Team and the Cabinet were now reflecting on what Breckland's roadmap would look like and how the Council was going to operate moving forward. He urged people to continue to follow the national guidance to keep themselves their loved ones, friends and family safe as it was imperative not to become complacent and lose all that hard work. Everyone must be patient and wait for their invitation from the NHS to be vaccinated.

Outside of Covid, Breckland Council was gearing up with its new waste contract working with its neighbours in Kings Lynn & West Norfolk and North Norfolk. This was expected to go live in April 2021 and the first of the brand-new waste collection vehicles would be arriving in Breckland in matter of days, on time and on budget. When that service did go live all would have a further enhanced provision of waste services across the District; one of the Council's core services whilst finding efficiency savings as discussed back in December 2019. This represented a real benefit, a fantastic joined up approach which could be achieved in local government by working together.

The Vice- Chairman thanked the Leader for his informative announcements. Members were then invited to ask questions.

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group had been fortunate enough to be called up for his first vaccination at the Thetford Healthy Living Centre. It had been pouring with rain on the day, but that had not stopped the cheery and efficient welcome that he had received from the volunteer marshals' in the car park. As he sat in the waiting area the volunteers had been busily cleaning the seats and welcoming people and putting everybody at ease. He felt very lucky that there were so many volunteers speeding up the vaccine rollout and no doubt saving many lives. He asked the Leader if there were any opportunities for Breckland Council to recognise the work of the volunteers in the Breckland community whether it be for the vaccine rollout, feeding people or helping with IT, and whether he would support some sort of reward scheme for Breckland's Covid heroes.

The Leader announced that the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Council already had such a plan underway when able and safe to do so to thank volunteers and businesses across the District and to be recognised with an appropriate award to attribute what had been a remarkable national effort.

Councillor Clarke thanked the Leader for his comprehensive report. He wanted to endorse what Councillor Jermy had said as he had recently received his vaccination at Swanton Morley surgery. He also wanted to pay particular tribute to the heroic refuse collectors who had continued the service throughout these difficult times. In terms of the funding allocation by Central Government for Covid support, he asked the Leader if the allocation was not totally used would that be clawed back by the Government or would it be used in other ways, or did the

Leader anticipate all those funds being utilised for its original purpose.

The Leader hoped that every local authority across the country was spending the funding in accordance with what it had been designed for. There were some requirements where that funding could not be spent but all the grants received by both Breckland and at the upper tier authorities were all working at pace to ensure that this funding was distributed to the right places and having the biggest impact to ensure that both residents and businesses could thrive. An update would be provided at the next meeting on any guidance in respect of additional funding.

Councillor Morton understood that the bus service from Dereham to Swanton Morley where the vaccine rollout was being carried out had been reduced. He asked the Leader if there was anything that Breckland Council could do to promote a better bus service.

The Chairman had not been aware that this service had been reduced but would be more than happy to take that up on the Council's behalf. He was aware; however, that any resident had the ability to ask for extra support in respect of transport as well as asking for their vaccination to be carried out at another centre in a more suitable area.

Councillor Atterwill, a Ward Representative for Swanton Morley, pointed out that the bus service had been reduced but following very helpful discussions with Steve James, the Council's Communities & Environmental Services Manager, further conversations had been had with Connect Bus who had subsequently re-instated the service to enable residents to attend their vaccine appointments. Members noted that Connect Bus had reduced the service due to the Covid outbreak, and at the time, the lack of passengers.

## **20/21 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

The Questions on Notice including the responses had been published and circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

The two Members who submitted the questions were invited to ask one supplementary question in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Birt thanked the Chairman for arranging the questions and responses to be published on the Council's website prior to the meeting.

He felt that the Leader had not appeared to answer his first question in respect of job density but instead had referred back to an ONS comment that had been made several years ago about an urban comparison between London and Norwich which he felt had nothing to do with Breckland. He asked the Leader if he believed the ONS density figures and what Breckland was going to do to improve the situation. Cllr Birt had also noted that the Leader had followed up his question by stating that there would be a key performance indicator review and asked when this would take place and if he would be able to contribute to that.

The Leader informed Members that the KPI review would be undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (O&SC). The Chairman of O&SC was currently working with a Cabinet Member and Officers to look at the KPIs across the District and what was applicable. Based on his response to the question on notice, the Leader stated that he had not understood the question raised by Cllr Birt and what he was trying to achieve and therefore had attempted to respond accordingly. Such work was being undertaken with Norfolk County Council, New Anglia LEP

and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that everyone was supporting growth and inward investment within the District, this work continued prior to Covid and would continue. Members had heard earlier how £42m had been allocated to businesses across the District to ensure that businesses could thrive and as part of Breckland's roadmap, current employment sites and allocated growth sites were being looked at within the Local Plan. Work was continuing with the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) and with the Kickstart programme to ensure individuals across the District were able to link up to relevant jobs.

The Leader informed Councillor Birt that if he had a supplementary question, he would be happy to pick this up off-line after the meeting and respond to him in greater detail in respect of his concerns.

Councillor Birt raised a supplementary question in response to his second question under this Standing Order regarding the carbon audit report. At point 2 of the response where it stated that only properties that the Council owned responsible for energy provision were included in the audit report. Councillor Birt felt that there was some inconsistency in the response provided and asked what the difference was between leisure centres and Barnham Broom Golf & Country Club as both seemed to appear under 'scope 3 inclusions' but not much detail had been provided.

On point 4, Councillor Birt asked why it had been so difficult to provide Members with actual energy usage data for the Council's own electricity and gas despite the fact that such information would have been needed for the carbon audit report. He had been trying to get hold of the data for many months and was still missing about six-month's worth of evidence that, in his opinion, seemed perverse that such information could not be obtained for the bills that were actually being paid.

Councillor Sherwood, the Executive Member for Climate Change advised that the answers provided to Councillor Birt's questions were full and detailed and if there were any additional points that he wished to raise he would be happy to oblige after the meeting. He was aware that Councillor Birt had been asking for information in respect of energy consumption at Elizabeth House and he believed that he had been responded to but advised that some of that data would not be in direct relation to the Council's own use but to commercial tenants' usage too.

Councillor Morton had been slightly disappointed with his response and asked if the Council was going to go ahead and approach this Local Energy Hub scheme in a positive manner.

Councillor Sherwood was pleased to inform Members that Officers would be attending a meeting very soon in respect of the Energy Hub. The Council was fully participating and fully involved in the scheme and would take up this opportunity for the Council and its residents.

#### **21/21 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

Councillor Jermy was aware that the Chancellor would be delivering his budget very soon and asked the Leader what he hoped the budget would contain to help the Breckland area, residents and businesses to get back on their feet post Covid.

The Leader felt that there would be a great deal of excitement and anticipation around the budget statement made by the Chancellor on 3 March. For Breckland, he hoped for a further extension to the furlough scheme, an extension to the stamp

**Action By**

duty for those trying to get a foot on the housing ladder and a deferral of business rates for those much needed businesses.

Councillor Atterwill directed his question to Councillor Claussen, the Executive Member for Planning. He stated that the Planning Committee had recently considered a large development in Dereham that had been the subject of much legal correspondence concerning alleged deficiencies in the signed S106 Legal Agreement. This had not been the first time in recent history that the Breckland community had felt let down by the Council's management of such Agreements and indeed some had lost out on important amenity space. To provide Breckland's communities with renewed confidence in the planning system, he asked Councillor Claussen if he would commit to undertake a thorough internal review of the Council's S106 processes including the outsourcing of such important work.

In response, Councillor Claussen explained that S106 Agreement issues was a non-executive decision, but he would have further dialogue with the Chairman of Planning to take this concern forward.

Councillor Birt's question was in relation to the New Homes Bonus that had been in place for a number of years. He appreciated that the Council was removing its reliance to support its revenue budget but when it was launched it stated that it would benefit communities by a reduction in Council Tax, the redevelopment of town centres and improvements to play parks etc - a consequence of excepting the New Homes Bonus. Also, as part of the scheme it was the communities who would decide how the monies would be spent. He asked if a written response could be provided on whether the communities of Watton, Saham Toney and Carbrooke had been involved in this process, and how much had been collected in those areas over the last 10 years.

The Leader advised Members that the Government was reconsulting on the New Homes Bonus across the whole of the country and Breckland Council was involved in that process along with the District Councillors Network. Many councils were reliant on their New Homes Bonus for their base budget but Breckland was not. The Council had been able to deliver some fantastic activities across the District including £750k for the Market Town Initiative, £1m towards the Vulnerability Programme and £300k had been set aside for the Town Delivery Plans, all supported by Breckland's New Homes Bonus. It was the role of elected Members to represent their local communities and discuss any ideas or concerns through the correct process, either through the Committee process or to the relevant Officer or Cabinet Member of this Council.

The Leader did not apologise for how this money was being spent as he knew how much of an impact this funding had and would have on improving the lives of residents within the District.

Councillor Colman asked the Leader if he would join him in congratulating Swaffham's Saturday market that had recently won a National Association of Britain Market Authorities Award. A great deal of effort had gone into the market to make it Covid safe and was a real asset to the town and continued to be a fantastic resource for not only the town but for the surrounding villages too.

The Leader was more than happy to do so. Swaffham had a fantastic market and he had been privileged to be in Swaffham when the Shop in Confidence Campaign was launched. All the market traders worked in conjunction with a number of community-leads and to receive this national recognition was something to be proud of.

**Action By**

Councillor Clarke's question was directed to the Executive Member for Planning in respect of flooding and related issues. He asked if the Executive Member for Planning agreed that a re-invigorated County Strategic Flood Group chaired by Lord Dannatt and the re-establishment of partnerships with the District Councils was good news. He also asked if he was confident that at District level this Council was using all its existing powers and opportunities in all aspects of flooding, and did he also agree that a task force of politicians was not needed to resolve flooding issues instead there needed to be a commitment made at a local level in the same way that West Oxfordshire District Council were doing to reduce local flooding issues. Councillor Clarke said that he was keen to support any initiative in conjunction with Norfolk County Council.

Councillor Claussen, the Executive Member for Planning felt that one of the issues was that everything was very fragmented and anything that was going to pull it altogether was something to be welcomed. The response was then deferred to the Leader of the Council being a member of Lord Dannatt's Panel.

The Leader informed Members that Lord Dannatt had set up the initial meeting in which everyone in attendance had three questions to respond to. The second meeting had already been convened, working with those partners individually to understand what their needs and challenges were. The outcomes of those meetings would have a very clear and definitive position on where roles and responsibilities sat.

He agreed that the current process was very confusing and felt that if a resident was flooded or had flood concerns, all they really wanted to know was where they could get help and support from, or when properties were flooded who would come and help them. He believed that this had been the premise of the first initial piece of work, the second part would be about how everyone could work together to ensure that any future flooding could be mitigated. The Leader assured Councillor Clarke that all his points were being picked up and that he would be more than happy to update Members at the next meeting.

Councillor Clarke thanked the Leader for his comments and was very pleased that Lord Dannatt, who he felt was an excellent Chair of this Group, would provide some initiative and drive to the process and he hoped that when he had managed to pull together the different authorities and legislative bodies that he would have an opportunity to visit the frontline and possibly talk to residents to provide some reassurance in what was an enormous task.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement and his roadmap, Councillor James was eager to support the High Streets in the market towns and asked Councillor Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture how the Council would be enabling this process.

Councillor Robinson was aware how hard Councillor James had worked to champion retailers and her passion for making the town centres viable. She had lobbied hard to improve the visual impact of Thetford Town centre, particularly by making Button Island a more amenable space. He had been pleased with the Prime Minister's announcements and the Regeneration Team was working hard to deliver short term projects under the NTI banner to coincide with the Government's roadmap and enable High Streets to re-open and resemble some normality. Following the recent announcement, he and the Officers had already been in discussion and were currently working towards what would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the 'Enjoy, Explore and Discover' campaign in support of the retailers as they returned

**Action By**

to trading. He looked forward to providing Councillor James and colleagues further details in the near future.

Councillor Brindle asked the Leader a question about roads. He was aware that Norfolk County Council was going to bring in more speed restrictions on the A1075 that connected Breckland's two largest towns. He implored Breckland Council to work with County to improve the road and/or to work with Norfolk Police to enforce speed restrictions.

The Leader stated that Local Ward Members had County divisional representatives that they could highlight these issues to as such matters did not sit within the District Council's remit; however, he was aware that colleagues across the Chamber had lobbied in their areas in respect of road safety concerns and he encouraged Members to continue to do so. As far as he was aware, Norfolk County Council had a good track record of responding to consultation and changes to improve safety provisions along the road network, but enforcement issues sat with Norfolk Police and any such concerns should be raised with the Chief Constable.

Councillor Terry asked for his thanks to be passed to Joanna Elks for arranging the webinar in respect of a County Lines presentation with the St Giles Trust. St Giles Trust was commissioned by the Norfolk Police & Crime Commissioner and working through the SOS Plus service in schools to raise awareness around serious crime and violence. This worked equipped young people with the knowledge and tools to stay safe and make positive choices.

Professionally trained staff exposed the realities and deglamourized some of the myths of getting involved in crime, they helped young people stay motivated and take a positive path and raised awareness about the signs to look out for amongst young people who could be vulnerable and at risk. He asked the Leader if Breckland would be keen in the future to work in partnership with St Giles Trust to help protect our young and vulnerable.

The Leader thanked Councillor Terry for his question. He apologised for not being able to attend that webinar but was pleased that Breckland Council was committed to reduce the impact of drugs in county lines within the community and with the £1m Vulnerability Programme he would be happy to link up with the organisation and with Officers to establish what further synergy Breckland Council could offer and facilitate greater future partnership to raise awareness and to ensure that young men and women were protected across the District from these horrendous activities that blighted the lives of so many.

Councillor Gilbert directed his question to the Leader. He referred back to the flooding issue and felt that it was very good to hear that Lord Dannatt was chairing this overarching Group looking at flooding issues and trying to bring people together. He felt; however, looking at it from a strategic level, it was not going to solve the problems locally. Watton and Saham Toney were already working together as a Watton & Saham Toney Flood Action Group an affiliated national flood forum to look at specific issues on the ground and this small group had been working for the last 3 years and trying to get specific issues sorted at local level. However, there had not been a great deal of support from Breckland Council and he asked the Leader if he could look at what Breckland Council could do to support local flood action groups across the District.

The Leader felt that strategy without tactics was the slowest route to victory and tactics without strategy was the noise before defeat. Lord Dannatt was now the

head person in charge across the region and once the strategy was known, that would then inform the plan, disseminating from the top.

The Leader implored the hard work of residents and community groups across the District, but such matters had to come from the top. He did not want a postcode lottery to what this should look like as one community had managed to establish a support group and had a greater influence in what occurred when others had not. He noted Councillor Gilbert's comments and concerns but for now everyone needed to be working together collectively across Norfolk to manage expectations and more importantly making some real changes in the long term.

Councillor Dowling wanted to thank Rob Walker, the Executive Director for Place for his submission to Suffolk County Council regarding North Farm, Elvedon Road in Thetford. Residents had been concerned about the application and the potential for extra HGV activity throughout Thetford and she thanked him for relating all concerns so succinctly.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dowling for her kind words.

### **22/21 MINUTES (FOR INFORMATION ONLY) (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Members were asked if they had any questions in respect of the following Minutes to raise their hands and direct their questions to the Chairmen accordingly.

#### **(a) Cabinet Minutes (for information only)**

The recommendation on page 21 of the agenda pack (Minute No. 24/21) – Quarter 3 Financial Performance report 2020-21 would be dealt with under Agenda item 12.

The recommendations on page 23 of the agenda pack (Minute No. 25/21) – Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy 2021-22 would be dealt with under agenda item 9.

The recommendations on page 26 of the agenda pack (Minute No. 26/21) – Integrated Shared Management Structure, would be dealt with under agenda item 11.

The recommendations on page 26 of the agenda pack (Minute No. 29/21) – Housing Services Review, would be dealt with under agenda item 22.

The unconfirmed Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 February 2021 were noted.

#### **(b) Overview & Scrutiny Commission (for information only)**

1. The confirmed Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 14 January 2021 were noted.
2. The unconfirmed Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission held on 9 February 2021 were noted.

#### **(c) Planning Committee (for information only)**

The confirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 25 January 2021 were noted.

**Statements**

The Chairman read aloud the following statements that applied to agenda items 9 and 10.

In accordance with The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote is now required at budget meetings.

Members were reminded that if they are two months or more in arrears, they must disclose the fact and not vote on any item to set tax or any decision which may affect its calculation.

**23/21 BUDGET, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY  
(AGENDA ITEM 9)**

Councillor Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth presented the report.

Budget setting was a balancing process that juggled variables to deliver a set of outcomes that were designed to deliver best value services and programmes for residents and businesses alike for the year ahead and, where possible, projecting into the future. Twelve months ago, that was the task for this Council, but little did we know then, how the lives of millions of people around the world would be changed in such a dramatic fashion.

Gathered again in 2021, albeit in a virtual world, to undertake the same, and moreover having had to reset the agreed budget in the autumn to reflect the changed circumstances as a consequence of the pandemic. Team Breckland had worked tirelessly throughout the past year to deliver services, support residents and businesses and in circumstances that none would have believed possible.

The budget setting process this year, as ever, had been challenged at 'star chambers', debated at Cabinet and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and now at Full Council. As a result of the various stages that had preceded this meeting, many Members had already seen the content, discussed the various merits of the details contained therein and would be familiar with the report.

The process this year had adopted the same overarching principles as in previous years:

- Assessing income streams
- Analysing costs
- Factoring in government funding
- Reviewing efficiency options
- Exploring new challenges
- Projecting new programmes

However, this time these processes had to be undertaken against the backdrop of the fallout from the pandemic.

Councillor Cowen was pleased to announce with enormous pride that Team Breckland had produced a balanced budget for the year 2021-2022. This

**Action By**

achievement had been made without the need for a reduction in the establishment or a dilution in services. In fact, the reverse, this budget would protect frontline services from cuts, a number of services would be enhanced, an improved waste service, the recruitment of new officers focused on fly tipping, business support, Covid-compliance and support and animal welfare.

The Council had honoured its commitments to its climate change programme and had broadened and enhanced the vulnerability programmes.

In being able to achieve all the above, the Council had utilised some reserves to underpin the budget proposals but without the prudent fiscal management over the past decade this would not have been possible.

This was a balanced budget for the year ahead and in order to maintain service provision, place the district in a place where it could build back stronger and maintain reserves, an increase to the Band D Council tax by £4.95 per annum to £98.73 was being proposed. This would mean that Breckland residents in a Band D property would pay £1.90 per week for the District Council tax but as 75% of residents were in bands A-C their Council Tax would be less.

Budget preparation, at the best of times, was a complex process and this year had brought with it its own particular challenges on an almost weekly basis. That the Council had reached such an excellent position had been down to the hard work and dedication of Officers and Members and the detailed analysis and interrogation of the Finance Team.

Councillor Cowen felt that this was a good budget, a result of team working at its best and was commended to Members for approval.

The proposal to take the recommendations enbloc was seconded.

Councillor Birt requested that the recommendations were not taken enbloc as there were some that he could support and some that he could not.

Councillor Jermy was pleased to respond to the budget report on behalf of the Labour Group. Members' attention was drawn to the previous year where the budget proposals had been supported by the Opposition. The Labour Group was in danger of creating a new trend as they would be supporting the budget once again and Members would be relieved that no amendments were going to be tabled. The amendment that they would have tabled had already been incorporated into the budget as a result of contributions made by Opposition Members in the budget preparation stage.

Members were most probably aware that he had always been concerned about the impact of Council Tax increases to some of the least well off in the District. Council Tax was after all an aggressive tax and if it continued to increase faster than wages then difficulties in paying would inevitably increase. Thankfully, for this year, additional safeguards had been built in with the introduction of the new £65k hardship fund. Without this safeguard, he would not have been able to support the budget and the proposed Council Tax increase.

Breckland Council was now delivering its vulnerability Programme and was set to adopt a sustainability strategy and through both of these, the Council was seeking to tackle many of the concerns that Opposition Members had raised. Covid had somewhat had an impact on these plans and the Council should be commended

on tackling domestic abuse, loneliness, isolation, rural poverty and food poverty and he hoped that these matters would continue to be developed in the year ahead as that support was likely to be needed more now than ever.

As a Member representing Thetford, he had been pleased with the Council's commitments to his community over the last few years. That said, there had been many decades of under investment in Thetford and many problems were deep rooted and would take a long time to address. To improve the budget, he would be looking for greater support for the existing residential areas within Thetford and parts of Dereham which had seen little investment. Breckland communities deserved better and existing areas could not be left behind as housing growth came to fruition. He hoped that when Covid passed and the financial position allowed, this Council would look seriously at what could be done to improve these communities.

Fly-tipping continued to be a menace across the District in both urban and rural communities but the progress over the past year had improved and the Council now had a robust approach and a clear message. He hoped that this would be developed further as well as the education aspect so that fly-tipping incidents could be driven down, and levels of re-use and recycling could be improved.

Councillor Jermy congratulated Councillor Cowen and his Team on the budget and he looked forward to it being approved with cross-party support and cross-party proposals incorporated within.

Councillor Gilbert also congratulated the Team for putting this budget together under such extraordinary circumstances. He then seconded Councillor Birt's proposal of not taking the recommendations enbloc as he could not support recommendation 1 in respect of the special expenses for street lighting particularly in Watton. He supported recommendations 2 to 9 but if taken enbloc he would regretfully have to vote against them all.

Councillor Terry also congratulated the Team on the budget in what had been an unprecedented year. However, as a school governor he still had concerns about food poverty.

Food poverty was a daily reality for more and more people in the United Kingdom and in Norfolk one in five parents had skipped meals so that their children could eat, and the problems were made worse during the school holidays. People going hungry in Norfolk and Breckland were on low incomes and children receiving free school meals did not eat as well during the school holidays.

In Norfolk, people living in disadvantaged communities were most vulnerable to food poverty and was the cause and had an effect on the social problems they faced. There was increasing evidence that the 29,300 children living in poverty in this County would go to school hungry. This affected their ability to concentrate and undermined their potential to attain qualifications and the need to escape the poverty trap of life on benefits or life in insecure employment.

With many Thetford and Breckland residents suffering in silence behind closed doors, food insecurity was a measure of severe deprivation and eating a decent diet was critical to protecting residents long term health. It was time for Breckland to have a plan for tackling this problem and to immediately provide a lifeline and the assistance which people so desperately needed.

Councillor Atterwill congratulated Councillor Cowen and the entire Finance Team

**Action By**

particularly Alison Chubbock, the Chief Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer, as he was sure they had worked many hours putting this budget together. He would be supporting the recommendations and had been particularly heartened by Councillor Terry's amendment that he had previously put forward and was pleased that the Cabinet had taken that on board in respect of the £65k hardship fund and felt that this was an excellent example of cross-party co-operation and he hoped that this would continue.

Councillor Birt thanked the Finance Team for their extraordinary efforts as he knew it must have been immensely difficult to put a budget together in these unprecedented times. He was confident with the accuracy even though he was unable to support all the recommendations.

As had already been mentioned, Council Tax was an aggressive tax with no accountability to pay and more and more of the burden was being moved to local taxpayers along with ever decreasing Central Government contributions. He appreciated that the cost of the Council Tax was to pay for social services and children's services, nevertheless the District Council contribution was still significant. He recognised that it was to pay for such matters as better fly tip control and animal welfare which he commended but he was struggling to agree with the £4.95 increase; however, thanks to the valiant efforts of Councillor Jermy and his Group he would reluctantly agree to this increase, but he was not able to support the budget overall.

It had become clear over the last few days that the Council's climate plan was far too weak and had not been able to quantify any actual carbon savings. He recognised that £325k had been moved over from the Reserves as a one-off contribution and was a step forward but a plan was needed now and that had not been put in place in the budget.

Councillor Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture felt that to bring forward a balanced budget was no mean feat in the current climate. He had looked at this from a perspective of supporting the communities and what this budget did was to enable the Council to continue to support residents with projects that helped with their well-being such as the Market Town Initiative.

The Council had committed substantial amount of funding for the Swaffham Heritage Action Zone project and a significant financial commitment towards the Town Delivery Plans. The Council had also awarded a £40k grant towards the first community supermarket in the region that was based in Thetford, which had had a positive impact on families and which a number of local authorities were seeking to replicate.

He commended the work carried out by Councillor Cowen and his Team but extended his commendation to Members and Officers across the Council who had all contributed to bring the Council to this position.

Councillor Borrett was pleased to hear that both the Leader of the Labour Group and the Independent Group would be endorsing the Conservative budget and he congratulated the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance for a 'cracking' piece of work.

Breckland Council still had the lowest District Council Tax in the country and by having a low Council tax and because it had investments that produced income, and as the support from the Opposition had demonstrated, the Council was still able to support services and balance its budget. This was a huge endorsement of

**Action By**

the decisions that the Conservatives had made in running this Council for many years.

He was pleased to see that there was provision for support of the vulnerable in this budget but also that this Council was delivering value for money for its residents and good quality services were being delivered across the board. This was an incredible result from the Conservative administration, and he paid particular thanks to the Leader, and all the Members of the Cabinet who had pulled together to agree the budget and produce this document and whole heartedly endorsed the recommendations.

Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets congratulated Councillor Cowen. Budget settings were challenging at the best of times but in these unusual and uncertain times he and his Team had managed to produce a balanced budget that supported vulnerability, sustainability and Breckland's market towns whilst maintaining the Council's frontline services and was still the lowest Council Tax of any District Council in the country. It allowed the residents and businesses to thrive and it allowed this Council as a district to grow back stronger out of Covid.

Councillor Hewett also challenged Councillor Gilbert's comments as he had felt a strange sense of déjà vu. These allowances had been raised before in open session. Members had attended Watton Town Council a short while ago to explain precisely why Breckland Council managed 2,200 lights on behalf of the five market towns and one village within the District and how it was managed as a contract. Watton had about 50% more streetlights than Dereham and about 30% less than Thetford. A number of streetlights had been replaced in Watton by Breckland Council at a cost of approximately £50k. Councillor Gilbert was urged to support the resolutions in full by acknowledging the fact that Watton residents would be paying a great deal more for their Council Tax if not supported.

The Chairman asked the Executive Manager for Governance for advice on whether the recommendations should be taken enbloc as two Members had indicated otherwise. A recorded vote would still be taken.

By law a recorded vote had to be conducted but this would take a great deal of time for each of the 9 recommendations and therefore, the Executive Manager for Governance suggested an alternative method. For those Members who could support most but not all of the recommendations when each name was called those Members were asked to indicate which recommendations they were voting against or were abstaining from but to confirm that they were supporting the remainder. This would then be clearly captured in the table that would be produced for the recorded vote without going through each individual recommendation on 9 occasions.

The Chairman agreed with these suggestions.

NAME	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Cllr Askew	X		
Cllr Atterwill	X		
Cllr Bambridge	X		
Cllr Birt	X	Rec nos. 2, 5 & 6	
Cllr Borrett	X		
Cllr Bowes	X		
Cllr Brame	X		
Cllr Brindle	X		
Cllr Bushell	X		

**Action By**

Cllr M Chapman-Allen	X		
Cllr S Chapman-Allen	X		
Cllr Clarke	X		
Cllr Claussen	X		
Cllr Colman	No response		
Cllr Cowen	X		
Cllr Crane	X		
Cllr Dowling	X		
Cllr Duigan	X		
Cllr Eagle	X		
Cllr Gilbert	X	Rec. no. 1	
Cllr Grey	X		
Cllr Harvey	X		
Cllr Hewett	X		
Cllr James	X		
Cllr Jermy	X		
Cllr Kiddell	X		
Cllr Kiddle-Morris	X		
Cllr Kybird	X		
Cllr I Martin	X		
Cllr K Martin	X		
Cllr Monument	X		
Cllr Morton	X	Rec nos. 2, 5 & 6	
Cllr Nairn	X		
Cllr Nunn	X		
Cllr Oliver	X		
Cllr Robinson	X		
Cllr Sherwood	X		
Cllr Suggitt	X		
Cllr Taylor	X		
Cllr Terry	X		
Cllr Webb	X		
Cllr Wickerson	X		
Cllr Wilkin	No response		
Cllr Wilkinson	x		
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>40 votes in favour of all 9 recommendations</b>	<b>3 votes against recommendations 1, 2, 5 &amp; 6</b>	<b>No abstentions</b>

Subject to two votes against recommendations 2, 5 and 6 and one vote against recommendation 1, it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the Breckland revenue estimates and parish special expenses for 2021-22 and outlined position through to 2024-25 (as set out in Appendix B and E of the report) be approved;
2. the capital estimates and associated funding for 2020-21 and 2021-22 and outline position through to 2024-25 (as set out in Appendix H of the report) be approved;
3. the fees and charges shown at Appendix D and D2 of the report, for adoption on 1 April 2021 be approved;

**Action By**

4. the Council Tax be set at £98.73 for a Band D property in 2021-22 (a £4.95 per annum increase on 2020-21 levels);
5. the financial Medium-Term Plan and associated staffing full-time equivalents at Appendix A of the report be approved;
6. the Capital Strategy at Appendix G of the report be approved;
7. the permanent establishment be increased by 2 FTE for 2 Digital roles (front end developer and back end developer) to provide stability and consistency enabling us to deliver our digital roadmap (as detailed in paragraph 1.11 of the report);
8. £65,000 be set aside for a Council Tax (S13A1c) hardship fund for 2021-22 and delegate finalisation of the policy to the Executive Member Finance & Growth and S151 Officer in conjunction with ARP (as detailed in paragraph 1.12 of the report);
9. delegation be given to the Head of ARP and the S151 Officer to approve and implement any NNDR Reliefs announced in the Budget on 3 March 2021 providing they are fully funded by Government and are implemented in line with Government guidance.

The Executive Member for Finance & Growth thanked everyone for their endorsements for all the hard work by Team Breckland who had delivered what he believed to be a superb budget for everyone in Breckland going forward.

**24/21 COUNCIL TAX 2021-22 (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

Councillor Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth presented the Council Tax setting report.

Council Tax was calculated by adhering to the rules laid out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended, as set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report. The result, as noted in the budget papers, showed that Breckland Band D rate should be set at £98.73 which was an increase of £4.95 per year given the total cost to the Breckland Band D taxpayer, for all the services that Breckland Council provided for approximately £1.90 per week.

He commended the two recommendations to Council.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

A recorded vote was taken.

NAME	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Cllr Askew	X		
Cllr Atterwill	X		
Cllr Bambridge	X		
Cllr Birt	X		
Cllr Borrett	X		
Cllr Bowes	X		
Cllr Brame	X		
Cllr Brindle	X		
Cllr Bushell	X		
Cllr M Chapman-	X		

**Action By**

Allen			
Cllr S Chapman-Allen	X		
Cllr Clarke	X		
Cllr Claussen	X		
Cllr Colman	No response		
Cllr Cowen	X		
Cllr Crane	X		
Cllr Dowling	X		
Cllr Duigan	X		
Cllr Eagle	X		
Cllr Gilbert		X	
Cllr Grey	X		
Cllr Harvey	X		
Cllr Hewett	X		
Cllr James	X		
Cllr Jermy	X		
Cllr Kiddell	X		
Cllr Kiddle-Morris	X		
Cllr Kybird	X		
Cllr I Martin	X		
Cllr K Martin	X		
Cllr Monument	X		
Cllr Morton	X		
Cllr Nairn	X		
Cllr Nunn	X		
Cllr Oliver	X		
Cllr Robinson	X		
Cllr Sherwood	X		
Cllr Suggitt	X		
Cllr Taylor	X		
Cllr Terry	X		
Cllr Webb	X		
Cllr Wickerson	X		
Cllr Wilkin	X		
Cllr Wilkinson	X		
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

The Democratic Services Team Leader reported that Councillor Colman was having technical difficulties but had asked that his vote be recorded in favour of the recommendations.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the special expenses for 2021-22 (at paragraph 1.3 of the report) be approved; and
2. the formal Council Tax resolutions for 2021-22 (at paragraph 1.4.1 to 1.4.5 of the report as set out below) be approved.

1.4.1 It is to be noted that on 25 February 2021 the Council has calculated: -

- a) the Council Tax Base 2021-22 for the whole Council area as 44,446.3 (item T in the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended) and
- b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates

as in the attached Appendix A of the report.

1.4.2 Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021-22 (excluding Parish precepts and special expenses) is £4,388,183.

1.4.3 That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2021-22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended (the Act):-

- a) £84,978,655 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the expenditure items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;
- b) £76,194,003 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the income items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act;
- c) £8,784,652 being the amount by which the aggregate at 1.4.3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.4.3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year;
- d) £197.65 being the amount at 1.4.3(c) above, divided by the amount at 1.4.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts);
- e) £4,396,469 being the aggregate amount of all special items (including Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached **Appendix A** of the report);
- f) £98.73 being the amount at 1.4.3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.4.3(e) above by the amount at 1.4.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its areas to which no special item relates;
- g) The figures shown in **Appendix B** of the report, being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 1.4.3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1.4.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;
- h) The figures shown in **Appendix C** of the report, being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 1.4.3(f) and 1.4.3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

1.4.4 That it be noted that for the year 2021-22 the Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Police & Crime Commissioner have stated the following amounts

in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	<b>Band A</b>	<b>Band B</b>	<b>Band C</b>	<b>Band D</b>
NCC	£981.96	£1,145.62	£1,309.28	£1,472.94
NPCC	£185.34	£216.23	£247.12	£278.01
	<b>Band E</b>	<b>Band F</b>	<b>Band G</b>	<b>Band H</b>
NCC	£1,800.26	£2,127.58	£2,454.90	£2,945.88
NPCC	£339.79	£401.57	£463.35	£556.02

- 1.4.5 That having calculated the aggregate in each case the amounts at 1.4.3(h) and 1.4.4 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in **Appendix D** of the report as the amount of Council Tax for 2021-22 of the categories of dwellings shown.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all Members for their patience and to the Officers for all the work in taking these recorded votes.

**25/21 INTEGRATED SHARED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW – PREFERRED OPTION FOR BRECKLAND AND SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCILS (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

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

The report was familiar to most Members as it had been debated at the Joint Strategy Board, Cabinet and at the Overview & Scrutiny Commission. He thanked all Members for those debates and the comments that had been made both formally and informally.

Members were asked to note the four additional recommendations from 5 to 9 that had stemmed from those conversations, debates and comments that should provide further reassurance to Members about how these decisions would be made in terms of implementing some of the recommendations. He thanked Members once again for their contributions.

It was noted that the recommendations at the recent South Holland Full Council had been approved.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

Councillor Birt had made previous representations to Cabinet and to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and he had explained why the numeric representation within this report to quantify a very wide linear parameter did not work. He did not agree with the scoring methodology for this new local strategic partnership as it had clearly been given a score on something that Breckland did not have. He could support some of the recommendations, but he could not agree to the delegation of some of these decisions based on the poor evidence that had been provided. He had no difficulty in supporting the separation from South Holland DC as the distance between the two and the carbon cost of that clearly meant it was more difficult than first thought. Members had already seen that it was possible for joint working to happen without the necessity for it to be completely tied up with

one particular council or group.

He asked whether recommendation no. 5 had been worded correctly as he felt that it should be a recommendation to Council to make an appointment rather than the Joint Appointments Committee.

He also proposed an amendment to recommendation no. 1 and asked for it to be amended to read: "the Council seek new working partners wherever that provides benefit to Breckland residents without specifically tying the Council to any one partner".

The proposal was seconded.

Subject to two votes to approve the amendment and 4 abstentions, the vote to amend recommendation no. 1 was lost.

Councillor Birt asked for a response to be provided on recommendation 5.

The Executive Manager for Governance advised that in respect of the powers of the Joint Appointments Committee, this Committee did have the authority to appoint all chief officers and deputy chief officers with the exception of the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Executive. In addition, statutory designations remained with Full Council as it was not the same as making appointments.

Councillor Borrett felt that the recommendations should be taken enbloc as there did not appear to be much support for Councillor Birt's opinions on this report.

Councillor Birt felt that he was being put in a position where he would be unable to vote on some of the recommendations as he did support some and asked the Chairman for advice.

The Chairman advised Councillor Birt that he should vote for, against or abstain on the recommendations.

The Executive Manager for Governance stated that Councillor Birt was quite entitled to request that his vote be recorded in the Minutes and that he voted in favour or against certain recommendations.

The recommendations were then taken enbloc, and following a show of hands it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the preferred option for the future of the integrated shared management structure and joint working arrangements between the two Councils as set out in paragraph 1.9 of this report be approved.
2. clause 8 of the memorandum of agreement between Breckland District Council and South Holland District Council and authorise any extension or shortening of the timeframe set out in clause 8.6A by mutual agreement between the two parties, so far as may be considered appropriate by the Leaders, following consultation with their respective Cabinets be activated.
3. to approve for consultation the interim structures to support and enable the achievement of the preferred option for both Councils.

**Action By**

4. subject to there being no material changes to the senior management structure following consultation with officers, delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Leader to implement the said structure.
5. in respect of any Chief Officer or Deputy Chief Officer post that remains to be filled following the introduction of the new structure at Appendices 3 and 4 of the report, Breckland Council Members of the Joint Appointments Panel meet as a separate Appointments Panel to make any appointment(s) to such post(s).
6. a separate report be brought to Council, prior to implementation of the new structure, to enable the Council formally to designate the required statutory officers from 1 May 2021 – being the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the officer responsible for the financial administration of the authority (s151 Officer).
6. the Terms & Conditions of staff in scope of the Review, as follows, be approved to ensure that both councils operate in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement at clause 8.6(d) in determining a fair and reasonable allocation of staff between the two Councils, to enable a fair and reasonable choice for staff in indicating their preferred council and to support the consultation on the interim structures.
  - (i) that any member of staff transferring employment from SHDC to BDC, where applicable, BDC would continue to fund the private healthcare scheme.
  - (ii) that any member of staff transferring employment from SHDC to BDC, where applicable, BDC would continue to support the special leave provisions.
8. the current appointment of Nathan Elvery as Strategic Advisor/Head of Paid Service be extended until 30 April in line with the timescale necessary to support the implementation of these additional recommendations.
9. delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Leader of the Council to agree any changes to and to sign and complete any amending agreement in respect of the Memorandum of Agreement that may be considered necessary to implement the above recommendations.

Councillor Birt wanted it recorded that he was in favour of all recommendations but was against recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

Councillor Morton also wanted it recorded that he voted against recommendation 1 but was in favour of recommendations 2 to 9.

**26/21 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020-21 (AGENDA ITEM 12)**

Councillor Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth presented the report.

In order to prepare a budget, a good understanding was needed in respect of the starting position and thus had to engage in the quarterly financial report process

that kept everyone informed as the year progressed of how the Council was performing against previous budget projections.

Quarter 3 provided a much clearer picture in this regard and this year had to take into account, not only the original projections, but also the amended budget in the Autumn. Added to this, the implications of the fallout from the pandemic, reduced income, amended programmes, lockdowns, government grants and support packages the Council was left with a situation that looked very different from what had been anticipated.

In financial management training one was always cautioned about 'carry forwards' in departmental budgets but this year things were different for reasons that had been explained in the report. Therefore, in addition to noting the report, there were three recommendations to consider. These had all been identified in paragraph 1.6 of the report and related to £15m for NNDR relief, the below budget NNDR levy and the NNDR S31 grants all in accordance with local government accounting rules.

The revenue and capital accounts could be found in the tables at Appendix A of the report. These contained the details and highlighted the significant variances between the original budgeted estimates and the position that the various portfolios now found themselves in.

Given the affect of the pandemic on normal life, the Council had to spend more on some aspects of the revenue account such as legal fees whilst incurring costs relating to the closure of leisure facilities. Similarly, capital projects had not progressed as swiftly as normal and some had stopped as a consequence of Covid; therefore, there was an underspend of approximately £1m.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, and following a show of hands it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the income received from the NNDR and Council Tax income compensation scheme be carried forward in reserve to cover the deficits recognised in future years (as detailed in paragraph 1.6 of the report);
2. the NNDR S31 grant for expanded retail relief and nursery reliefs received in 2020-21 is carried forward in reserve to cover the deficits recognised in 2021-22 from the lost income as a result of these NNDR reliefs (as detailed in paragraph 1.6 of the report); and
3. the below budget NNDR levy payment at the end of the year is carried forward in reserve to cover the deficits recognised in future years from the lost income as a result of the pandemic (as detailed in paragraph 1.6 of the report).

**27/21 BRECKLAND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 13)**

Councillor Ian Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement & Member Champion for Breckland Sustainable Strategy presented the report.

He felt that this was an incredibly important day for Breckland Council in recognition of all the hard work that had been put in towards what was an exciting programme. He had been delighted to read in the Eastern Daily Press the

**Action By**

ambitious 2035 climate change fight plan unveiled and was in respect of what was now going to be discussed and voted upon shortly.

The recommendations were on page 154 of the agenda pack and would be proposed accordingly following a short presentation by the Council's Senior Policy Advisor, Greg Pearson.

In September 2019, Breckland Council became one of only two Councils across Norfolk to recognise that there was an issue and thus a climate emergency was declared. Through this process, the Council had been working towards a date to set net zero and Councillors would be asked to support this ambitious target of 2035 - the Government target was between 2030 and 2050.

Members had been kept fully informed of progress through Cabinet meetings, a Members' Forum in November 2020 and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission; and all Members had been given the opportunity to take part in the discussions.

The process and key actions that would ensure success to reach net zero carbon emissions were explained.

Councillor Sherwood thanked the 100s of people who had responded to the Climate Change public survey and was delighted that Members would have the opportunity to support the release of £525k that highlighted the Council's commitment to climate action. This money was going to be spent on various work programmes, details of which could be seen on page 156 of the agenda pack.

The monies that had already been spent and the commitments that had already been made were highlighted:

- £825,000 to replace all the streetlights it owned with LED alternatives which was already reducing energy consumption.
- £90,000 to fund a new 2-year fixed term Environment and Climate Change Officer.
- £10,000 to carry out an initial carbon audit to understand its emissions more fully.
- £10,000 for Elected Member ICT kit to enable paperless meetings.

A presentation including a detailed overview was then provided by the Senior Policy Advisor (see presentation attached).

It was noted that the web pages would be going live after this meeting and the Council would commit to publish its carbon footprint and emissions levels annually on its website.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

Councillor Bowes commended the report but asked for assurance from Councillor Sherwood that the issue of general littering would be fully addressed through this Strategy and through the Council's environmental protection aspirations. Breckland Council had a very good record of tackling fly-tipping but the level of general littering along the hedgerows, verges, publically accessible woodland walks, and amenity areas was unacceptable and was, in itself, a serious threat to wildlife, flora and the natural environment, as well as being an eyesore. She asked if Breckland Council would be working with Norfolk County Council and other agencies across the board to educate and campaign against the irresponsible behaviour of littering.

**Action By**

Councillor Sherwood thanked Councillor Bowes for her support to the programme. He knew that she and many other Members were passionate about all aspects of the environment. That said, a Board would be duly formed with organisations and perhaps 'Keep Britain Tidy' to help and inform the Council of any forthcoming projects so that it could work with them to ensure that the hedgerows and towns were clean and tidy. During this process what had been promising was the public engagement which he felt had changed over recent years. The public wanted to be involved and wanted to make a difference and with this Strategy he felt that everyone would see a real change.

Councillor Gilbert fully supported and congratulated Councillor Sherwood for this report and for Councillor Morton, a Member of the Green Party for seconding the proposals. This he felt was not a political issue in any shape or form and believed that everyone was singing from the same 'hymn sheet' and implored the Council to make this a cross party group working together going forward. He referred to page 214 of the agenda pack where it stated that Breckland Council would work with its residents, businesses and partners and felt that Breckland Council should be working with itself too and be a beacon of light to ensure that whatever was brought forward had full support from everyone whatever the political affiliation.

Councillor Sherwood thanked Councillor Gilbert for his comments and felt that what everyone had seen thus far with the seconding of the Strategy by Councillor Morton there was already broad support across the chamber.

Councillor Kybird was satisfied that the Breckland Sustainability Strategy was both fit for purpose and had addressed the key practical issues in achieving its carbon neutral target by 2035.

On behalf of the Labour Group, Councillor Dowling thanked the Senior Policy Advisor for his work on this Sustainability Strategy. She was very pleased that the Strategy had reached this stage since she tabled the motion to declare a climate emergency in 2019. It was crucial that Breckland continued to lead by example and she was happy that there had been a budget set aside for improvements to the Council's assets and she hoped that this acted as a stimulus for others to follow suit.

Covid had persuaded many people to walk and exercise in their surrounding areas and this had led many to reacquaint themselves with their local wildlife and scenery and felt that the Council should capitalise on this and involve schools and young people in environmental protection and awareness issues. As a District Council, it must ensure that it involved all of the population in this work and not everyone had access to technology and therefore it needed to advertise what it was doing to those who needed a more traditional method of communication.

Councillor Dowling had been pleased to note that the main focus would be on reducing the carbon index and the net zero date had been suggested as 2035 but there were many issues that were important in a rural area such as Breckland. Pollinators needed to be encouraged into its green spaces by rewilding where it could as the decline of the insect population was something that everyone had noticed with great concern. The tree planting had been successful and had caught the imagination of the public, but care and attention was also needed for Breckland's existing trees. With severe changes to the weather systems predicted it would also be important to look at areas that were subject to localised flooding, other local authorities including West Oxford DC regularly inspected its ditches and water courses and produced flood reports.

**Action By**

There was an urgency around this agenda and the timescales needed to reflect this and whilst she understood that it was not advisable to over promise what could be achieved by 2030, the Council also needed to proceed as swiftly as possible, with strategies that could be implemented. Some of the climate change results were regarded as unstoppable after this date and whilst Covid 19 had dominated the last year, in politics, reaching net zero was back at the top of the agenda with G7 having reconvened. The general consensus from Government advisors was that domestic support could be hard to achieve therefore she felt it was crucial to get on board with other councils to develop a unified approach for the future.

Councillor Sherwood assured Councillor Dowling that all residents would be kept informed by whatever means including Breckland Council's magazine that would include details of the climate change and strategy being proposed.

Councillor James had been really pleased to see that the 'Switch and Save' scheme had been included in the Strategy as this had been a matter that she had raised really early on in the process. She was also pleased to see the grant schemes included. Breckland had a passionate community of volunteers within the District that would really appreciate this support. As a side note, she was aware that many of her colleagues within the meeting were already involved in schools and the school governors and highlighted a project called 'Eco Schools'. Councillor James had been involved in this project for many years and felt that it was a worthwhile endeavour for pre-school children right through to the secondary schools and felt that this would be another way that Breckland could encourage and motivate.

Councillor Borrett was pleased to hear Members of the Opposition supporting the Conservative administration in Breckland and another in West Oxfordshire. All were being responsive to their residents and were dealing with this really important issue.

On another matter, Councillor Borrett mentioned Councillor Gilbert's plea about being involved in everything before any decision was made. This had been the case in respect of the streetlighting in Watton and had been surprised when Councillor Gilbert had chosen to vote against it.

He fully supported this report. Witnessing Breckland, a relatively small Council, spending such large sums of money in an area such as this was hugely responsible. Some trees that he had planted as a boy with his grandfather were now quite established in the landscape and ever since then tree planting had been a major interest and hobby of his and to see that this was now coming forward as a public policy from public bodies was, in his opinion, a really important piece of work.

Councillor Borrett touched on the subject of electric charging points. He felt that as Breckland was such a rural authority covering a huge area in comparison to other District Councils, it was vital that it helped to support the delivery of electric charging points as he doubted that the market would be able to provide them without such support.

Overall, he felt that the Cabinet Member and the Council had done a sterling job in bringing this forward in a time when all budgets were very tight; therefore, to be able to commit the sums and the target of 2035 for carbon neutrality was a huge achievement.

Councillor Birt was a little disappointed that Councillor Borrett had chosen to bring politics into this report as he knew that everyone was trying very hard to make this

**Action By**

a cross party effort. He felt there were admirable environmental benefits in this plan, but it needed to be pointed out that this was not a plan to get the Council to zero carbon. It did not actually quantify any carbon savings whatsoever as the Council had not reached that far yet. He hoped, in the future, that he would be able to fully support a plan when it actually set out methods and quantified the carbon that this Council was going to save by its actions. There was still a long way to go but he was able to vote in favour of this report as an incremental step forward as he recognised that the Council had done some good work and had allocated some money towards it and was a step in the right direction.

He understood the issues in respect of the Council's waste vehicles. He was somewhat disappointed that the Council had not set a 2030 target which it could have done by including an exception note in respect of the contracted vehicles. He then referred to a very important graph within the report that indicated the effect of delaying any policies that would put greater carbon emissions into the environment as a result. He strived to encourage people to be as active as possible and get on with this and come up with proper quantified methods of saving carbon.

Councillor Taylor mentioned other contacts that could be beneficial such as 'Pure Clean Air' that worked internationally and raised awareness by working with school children and also, more locally, 'Love Norfolk Hate Litter'.

Councillor Atterwill wholeheartedly supported the recommendations and thanked, in particular, Greg Pearson, the Senior Policy Advisor for the excellent work that he had done. He also thanked Councillor Sherwood for driving this forward as he was sure that not everyone in the Conservative Group had been wholly in favour of this to start with but felt that the work he had done had brought everybody together to support it. He also thanked the Officers and Rob Walker, the Executive Director of Place, for the excellent Opposition Briefing that had recently been held. Many questions had been asked and cleared up some of our initial misgivings and he was sure that Councillor Sherwood would agree with him that this was a start of a journey and was an excellent start particularly the funding that had been put forward and was one of the first Councils to get this far. The next challenge would be to try and get Norfolk County Council on board and he looked forward to Councillor Borrett becoming the environmental champion for the County going forward.

Councillor Kiddell thanked the whole Team for bringing this exciting venture forward and was a start of a journey that she was looking forward too and thanked the Senior Policy Advisor for highlighting the Carbon Literacy training. As Chairman of the Member Development Panel she had welcomed this training as everything that Members learnt could help towards our own carbon footprints and pass onto our constituents.

Councillor Morton concluded the debate by thanking Greg and Ian for the work they had done in getting the project this far and felt most things had been said about it but he was interested to see how much money was being spent on environmental issues and he hoped that the Council could leverage some of that money to focus on reducing our carbon emissions. With the new extra money of over £500k he assumed that this was for a period of 5 years in which case if we do identify projects that were worth doing he hoped that we would be able to go and find the money for anything that would speed up our carbon emissions reductions.

The Chairman felt that this had been a very good debate and was great to see everyone across the board coming in on it. There was now something on the table and was on everyone's agenda.

Following a show of hands, it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the Breckland Sustainability Strategy be approved and adopted;
2. the £525,000 from the Inclusive Growth Reserve to fund the programme of work as set out in Appendix 6 of this report be released; and individual expenditure be delegated to both Executive Directors in consultation with the lead Member for Climate Change and the Leader of the Council; and
3. the target of being net zero by 2035 be approved and adopted.

**28/21 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBER SCHEME ALLOWANCES 2020 - 2023 (AGENDA ITEM 14)**

Mark Stinson, the Executive Manager for Governance presented the report.

In accordance with the Council's legal obligations, Breckland Council had appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider and recommend the Members' Scheme of Allowances.

This Panel had been made up of Jonathan Rogers, Alistair Skipper, Les Spilman, Sam Watts and Andrew Egerton-Smith, the Chairman of the Panel who was in attendance to answer any questions.

Whilst it was at the discretion of the Council to agree any changes to the scheme, the Council was required to have due regard to any recommendations that was made to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The proposals made by the Panel had been set out at Appendix A of the report and also included in the recommendations on page 222 of the agenda pack. The Panel's recommended increases had been applied to the current allowances and had been set out in Appendix B of the report.

It was noted that there were a number of errors in respect of applying the formula as shown on Appendix B of the report and these were highlighted and corrected as follows:

- Chairman of the Licensing Committee: £2,840 per annum
- Chairman of the Committee of the Licensing Authority: £2,840 per annum
- Leader of the Opposition Group: £2,840 per annum
- Vice-Chairman of the Council: £2,840 per annum

The report was originally scheduled to be heard at a Full Council meeting early in 2020 but the meetings at that time had been cancelled due to the pandemic and as such the proposals from the IRP and had been suggested by the IRP to be backdated to 2020 but to also cover a 3-year period ending on 31 March 2023.

The Leader extended his thanks to the Independent Remuneration Panel that was made up of residents across the District and the County. He supported recommendations 1, 3 and 4 but proposed an amendment to recommendation 2 as follows:

“That the District Councillors Basic/Special Responsibility Allowance is aligned to

the locally agreed Breckland staff pay settlement on an annual basis for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023 **and for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 be set at a zero increase**".

The Leader hoped that colleagues across the Council would agree with this amendment and again echoed his thanks to the Independent Panel for their hard work and their forbearance in the delay for this coming forward.

The Leader's motion was seconded.

Councillor Clarke thanked the Leader for his remarks. He was going to propose the same but speaking on behalf of the Labour Group, it supported the principle of any increase being linked to staff pay. There was a detailed process for assessing whether an increase was warranted and had long argued this point. He asked if a 2% increase in allowances would result in more people of working age becoming Councillors and felt that the times of the meetings should be varied to include some evening meetings as the current timings of the meetings were the biggest barrier. The Leader had made an amendment to recommendation 2 which he broadly supported but asked if he could also make an amendment to the Leaders motion with a small addition.

The Executive Manager for Governance advised that this was not an amendment the Leader had proposed a motion and it was quite legitimate for any Member to propose an amendment to that motion. He then repeated the proposed motion to recommendation 2 and advised Councillor Clarke that he could propose an amendment to that motion.

Councillor Clarke proposed an addition to the Leader's motion as follows:

"That the Council recommends to Cabinet that this windfall of approximately £9k the backdating of that total amount be distributed equally between any food banks operating in the Breckland Council area".

The addition/amendment to the motion was seconded.

The Executive Manager for Governance stated that Councillor Clarke's amendment was in order and was correct in terms of the Executive powers and Full Council as the allocation of any funding would be an Executive decision. As it had been moved and seconded then Members had to vote on that amendment.

Councillors Jermy, Clarke, Brindle, Atterwill, Birt, Gilbert, Harvey and Wickerson asked for their vote in support of the amendment to be recorded.

Following a show of hands, and subject to 3 abstentions, the amendment was lost.

Councillor Gilbert had been disappointed that although the IRP had interviewed the Leader and the Chairman of the Planning Committee they had not interviewed or spoken to any Opposition Members.

Even though the vote had been lost, Councillor Atterwill asked the Leader what this money of £9,200 would be spent on. He had been moved by Councillor Terry's earlier remarks in respect of child hunger in the District and felt certain that the public at large would have gratefully received such a small gesture and put that money to charitable purposes.

The Leader thanked colleagues across the political spectrum for their comments.

**Action By**

He reminded Members that Breckland Council had committed over £60k for food hardship across the District and as Councillor Clarke was aware the Council had worked closely with the Dereham Food Bank and continued to work hard across the District for those who found themselves in need.

Funds had already been committed to the Vulnerability Programme therefore in response to Councillor Atterwill's question, in any prudent budget, if there was a windfall of any type it was only right and proper that it went back to a budget position into Reserves or other baseline positions so that money could be reallocated where that need was most presented.

Whilst the Council had unallocated monies, he felt that it would be inappropriate at this time to automatically allocate it to that position. However, he was more than prepared, if Members and Officers informed the Cabinet over the coming weeks that there was a need for the Council to increase the current support to food hardship or other needs across the District, the monies would be allocated accordingly.

Councillor Borrett supported the Leaders comments. The reason that the Opposition had been able to support the Breckland budget was due to the Council having a robust and focused set of objectives that included putting money aside to help the vulnerable. He asked Members to remember that this money was not our money, it was taxpayer's money and to try and bypass the decision making process without any prior consultation was disappointing but if there proved to be a further demand this could be looked at through the proper procedures.

Councillor Birt pointed out that at his very first Council meeting he had made a proposal that was not supported and was told that he needed to make representation to the IRP. Nearly a year after it had met, he had since discovered what they had said without being given the opportunity to make his own representations and he had not realised that the IRP had even met. In principle, he supported the idea of paying an allowance to permit everyone to take a part and become a Councillor but he was concerned that the Council seemed to be offering the highest remuneration in Norfolk to Breckland's Committee Chairmen. He also asked the IRP why it paid 65p per mile mileage allowance when community car drivers only received 45p per mile and wanted to know what legislation allowed the whole of the 65p to be excluded from income tax.

The Executive Manager Governance said that the Chairman of the IRP was in attendance and would be able to respond to Councillor Birt.

Mr Andrew Egerton-Smith thanked the Chairman of the Council for being given the opportunity to speak. He advised that when the Panel met quite a while ago his clear recollection was that the Panel debated speaking to the Opposition and an invitation had been sent to which no response had been received. In respect of the mileage allowance, the Panel did consider this to be high but was informed that this amount had been laid down in statute and emphasised that the Panel had been told that there was a system whereby the organisation paying these allowances could receive some form of dispensation from HRMC and this had in fact been done. More importantly, the Panel had felt very strongly that there should be some separate arrangement for electric cars and had been surprised that there had been no reference made for any such payments to be within the schedule particularly at a time when the authority was looking very carefully at how to work in a greener fashion.

Councillor Atterwill referred to Councillor Borrett's earlier comments and stated that

an amendment to provide additional one-off funds to help hungry people was, in his opinion, just being kind and thoughtful.

Councillor Kybird pointed out that the 65p per mile was the same rate as Officers were paid and was taxed on monthly basis.

Councillor Gilbert could not recall receiving any communication from the IRP.

Councillor Jermy stated that he had been a Breckland Councillor since 2011 and had been the Leader of the Opposition for just as long and had received one invitation to speak to the IRP which he had gladly accepted. He had not received an invitation on this occasion but would be happy to contribute to any discussion going forward.

Members were then asked to vote on the recommendations including the motion to recommendation 2 that had been proposed and seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the Carer's allowance is increased in line with the increase to the 'Real Living Wage' on an annual basis and be back dated for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023.
2. the District Councillors Basic/Special Responsibility Allowance be aligned to the locally agreed Breckland staff pay settlement on an annual basis for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023 **and for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 be set at a zero increase.**
3. the Council continues to review any changes to roles and responsibilities undertaken by Councillors and should there be any significant changes and/or requests from Parish Councils to review a request then it will invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to convene to consider the impact of any such changes/request.
4. the Council note that a Member may, by notice in writing given to the proper officer of the authority, elect to forgo their entitlement or any part of his or her entitlement to allowances.

Councillor Birt and Councillor Wickerson wanted it to be recorded that they voted in favour of recommendations 1, 3 and 4 but against recommendation 2.

**29/21 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22 (AGENDA ITEM 15)**

Councillor Suggitt, the Executive Member for Governance presented the report.

The Pay Policy Statement was a policy that the Council was required to produce every year. It was a statement of fact and it had to be approved by the 31 March and published on the website as soon as possible thereafter.

The Statement covered the remuneration of Chief Officers and lowest paid employees and the relationship between Chief Officers remuneration and that of other Officers.

Included in the Statement was the latest gender pay gap figure at 16.8% which was an improvement from the previous year's figure of 18.8% and more importantly brought the Council closer to the national average of 15.5%. The Council

continued to review its Policies particularly those covering of how the Council recruited to areas where the gap was more significant, and these were currently being looked at as part of Worksmart. Also, as part of the upcoming Customer Services review, a new proposed structure, if agreed, would also create more and higher paid opportunities which the Council believed would further narrow the gap.

The recommendation on page 234 of the agenda pack was proposed and Seconded, and following a show of hands, it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved.

### **30/21 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 16)**

Councillor Suggitt, the Executive Member for Governance introduced the report but accordingly passed the Risk Management Policy to Ryan Pack, the Innovation & Change Business Partner to present.

The Council was in a position where its risk framework had to be reviewed. The framework before Members was the same as had been presented to a recent Governance & Audit Committee meeting subject to one amendment.

The reason for this amendment was due to the fact that the Council was currently in the process of recruiting a temporary Performance Framework Manager, but as yet, had been unsuccessful. Part of the post's remit would be to look at risk and therefore it was proposed that a short extension be made to the current policy followed by a further report to the Governance & Audit Committee in September and then to Full Council in December.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

As the Chairman of the Governance & Audit Committee, Councillor Borrett stated that it did not seem sensible to agree the Policy and bind the hands of the new person responsible. This was the reason for the amendment.

Following a show of hands, it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the amendment of item 19 in the draft risk policy to allow for a further review in six months be agreed; and
2. the draft Risk Management Policy be adopted.

### **31/21 CONSTITUTION - CALL-IN OF OFFICER NON-KEY DECISIONS/DEFINITION OF KEY DECISION (AGENDA ITEM 17)**

Councillor Suggitt was pleased to present the report that considered the variations to the Constitution.

The report sought to amend the Constitution in respect of excluding the call-in of non- key officer decisions and to clarify the definition of a key decision. This report had been considered at a recent meeting of the Governance & Audit Committee where Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission had also been invited and the recommendations had been supported.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

Councillor Borrett, the Chairman of the Governance & Audit Committee believed that the recommendations did not reflect what Members of the Governance & Audit Committee had agreed. The Cabinet Member was correct, it had been supported, but according to the first recommendation it still stated that Members should decide whether they wished to exclude call-in from non-key decisions where in fact, in his opinion, the decision had already been made.

It was agreed that the words 'whether they wish' would be removed from the first recommendation.

Councillor Birt had attended the Governance & Audit Committee meeting and had raised concerns about the key decision threshold being raised to £250,000 and wanted it recorded in the Minutes that the quarter of a million figure was much too high and because of this he could not support it.

Following a show of hands, it was

**RESOLVED** that:

- a. **Call-in for Non-Key Officer Decisions** – that Members decide to exclude Call-in from Non-Key Decisions made by Officers under delegated authority, and whether to amend the Constitution in accordance with Appendix A of the report;
- b. **Definition of Key Decision** - that the existing definition in the glossary to the Constitution be amended to read as follows:  
  
*"Key Decision" means a decision which, in relation to an Executive Function, has a significant effect on communities in two or more wards of the Council and/or is likely to result in the Authority incurring expenditure, or making savings, in any single financial year above £250,000."*
- c. the Key Decision figure be re-assessed at the end of a 12 month period to enable Members to consider whether the expenditure/savings figure is still appropriate.

### **32/21 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 18)**

Councillor Claussen, the Deputy Leader advised Members of the following changes:

Committees:

- Planning Committee: Cllr Brame to be replaced by Cllr Kybird and Cllr Ian Martin be appointed as a substitute.
- Licensing Committee: Cllr Brame to be replaced by Cllr Colman.
- Committee of the Licensing Authority: Cllr Brame to be replaced by Cllr Colman.
- Breckland Area Museums Joint Committee: Cllr Brame to be replaced by Cllr Bushell.

Outside Bodies:

- Charles Burrell Museum Trust: Cllr Brame to be replaced by Cllr James.
- Breckland Youth Advisory Board: Cllr Ian Sherwood to be replaced by Cllr Peter Wilkinson and Cllr Dale to remain as the second representative.

As part of the Youth Advisory Board the Members for the Youth Action Groups will be:

- Attleborough - Cllr Dale
- Dereham - Cllr Bushell
- Swaffham - Cllr Colman
- Thetford - Cllr James
- Watton - Cllr Kiddell

No further nominations were put forward.

Under this item Councillor Atterwill said that he had thoroughly enjoyed Councillor Brame's Chairmanship at this meeting, it had been very professional, and he hoped that everyone else in the meeting agreed.

The Chairman thanked Members for their kind words it had been different, but it had been a pleasure and an honour.

**33/21 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 19)**

None.

**34/21 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 20)**

None.

**35/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 21)**

Following a show of hands and subject to one vote against the resolution, it was:

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 & 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act."

The Chairman announced that the public part of this Full Council meeting was now closed.

**36/21 HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 22)**

Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Health & Housing presented the report.

Many Members would be familiar with this report already as it had been considered at the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet where a number of questions had been raised and responded to accordingly.

The recommendations were very important as a Team structure with less reliance

**Action By**

on temporary roles would provide greater stability and framework for delivering Breckland an excellent future housing service.

Whilst the future could not be predicted, it was believed that this new structure would provide greater resilience and be better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Accompanying the new structure was the continued development of the culture within this service and at the heart of this structure would be a skilled Team providing early intervention and prevention to minimise the risk of homelessness and inappropriate housing. Most importantly, customers would be treated as people not just as numbers.

Councillor Webb thanked the Officers, Steve James, the Communities & Environmental Services Manager and Gill Duffy, the Housing Manager, for all their hard work in producing this report alongside Members who had offered their comments.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded.

Councillor Atterwill thanked Councillor Webb and her Team as he had been immensely impressed with the work of the Executive Member within the Housing Portfolio and was pleased that these changes would provide great improvements going forward.

Councillor Birt fully supported the recommendations but did not understand why this report could not have been taken in public session.

Following a show of hands, it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) the proposed structure of the Housing Service be approved;
- b) the increase in staffing costs for 2 years to enable capacity for change be approved; and
- c) the change from temporary roles to permanent roles for the officer roles funded through annual government grant be approved.

The meeting closed at 1.15 pm

CHAIRMAN