

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held on Thursday, 4 March 2021 at 10.00 am

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

PRESENT

Cllr Rhodri Oliver (Chairman)	Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Cllr Lynda Turner (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Robert Kybird
Cllr Timothy Birt	Cllr Ian Martin
Cllr Hilary Bushell	Cllr Mike Nairn
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cllr David Wickerson
Cllr Terry Jermy	Cllr Peter Wilkinson (Substitute Member)

Also Present

Cllr Gordon Bambridge	Cllr Sarah Suggitt
Cllr Paul Claussen	Cllr Alison Webb
Cllr Keith Martin	

In Attendance

Ralph Burton	- Strategic Property Manager (BDC)
Jason Cole	- Executive Manager People & Innovation
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer BDC)
Ryan Pack	- Innovation and Change Business Partner
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer
Ruth Tudge	- Democratic Services Officer

24/21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

25/21 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

An apology had been received from Councillor Dale. Councillor Wilkinson was in attendance as her substitute.

26/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

27/21 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

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28/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

29/21 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed non-Members in attendance.

30/21 Q3 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Executive Member for Governance, Sarah Suggitt was pleased to introduce the new look Quarter 3 Performance Report. She explained that the report positively showed an improvement in the Contact Centre with the introduction of a new system to support both staff and residents which had yielded positive results. Throughout the report the impact of Covid-19 could be seen and had been reflected in some areas more than others.

The Innovation and Change Business Partner, Ryan Pack explained the new report in further detail and explained that with the new format, they had intended to show the pre-Covid-19 performance and the performance of the last two quarters to reflect the impact it had on the Council. He felt it was important to contextualise Breckland Council's performance and how it was reacting during Covid-19. He re-capped on the positives within the report with the improvement achieved within the Contact Centre and highlighted the improvement in recycling tonnage.

Councillor Birt noted that the abandoned call rate on Pentana for February alone was indicating 19.52% which was quite high and felt that the wait time calculation was still unclear. He also asked if there could be something within the report to indicate rapid changes in performance in service areas and asked for clarification on what the parameters were when assessing the carbon footprint.

The Innovation and Change Business Partner advised he would check on the call wait time and the carbon footprint and report back with the information. The Executive Manager People and Innovation, Jason Cole, explained that within the Contact Centre the changes were monitored regularly, hourly and sometimes on a minute-by-minute basis depending on any peaks throughout the day and resources would be diverted to counteract any rapid increase in calls along with any pre-known factors that could affect the performance. He would contact the Customer Service Manager to find out if there was something particular in February that had caused that increase and report back.

Councillor Kybird commented on the number of re-tweets and encouraged Members to re-tweet to reach a wider audience. He also queried the number of empty properties brought back into

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use against the number of empty properties within Breckland and asked for further explanation on the two different figures. The Innovation and Change Business Partner explained that the figure for empty properties brought back into use on the Key Performance Indicators was as a direct officer intervention by a member of the Private Sector Housing Team working to get an empty property back into use, and the number of empty properties within Breckland was a figure taken from Council Tax reports.

Councillor I Martin noted that there had been a significant improvement within the Contact Centre and asked how this process was being managed. The Innovation and Change Business Partner explained all Contact Centre staff were now working from home and the Manager of the Contact Centre had said there been an improvement in some areas due to less office distractions, but he would ask for a more in-depth report and come back with a full response.

Councillor I Martin also noted the staff sickness figures and asked how staff wellbeing was being managed with staff being isolated and working from home. He also queried the figures on empty properties and asked for further information on how difficult this might be and if the target set was too high.

In response the Executive Member for Health and Housing, Councillor Webb, stated that Covid-19 had caused an impact with staff being seconded elsewhere. She also believed that the Housing Review that was currently underway would lead to major changes around the way the work was being done and that the staffing would be increased to support this. She also explained that she had tasked the Team to look at the figures for empty properties and review the way this was managed and was confident this would be improved when all the changes had been put in place.

Councillor Birt suggested that it might be valuable to have a report to see how the changes that had been made within the Housing Team had affected the number of empty properties brought back into use to see if this figure improved and if the target had been set at an achievable figure. Councillor Webb agreed this would be possible at a future meeting, giving time to put the changes in place. The Chairman suggested that this be added to the Work Programme with a date to be determined when Councillor Webb felt this feasible, it could then be added to the agenda.

The Innovation and Change Business Partner advised that there had been discussions with the HR Team regarding staff sickness around stress and anxiety which was taken very seriously. He explained that the figure could be quite volatile in terms of days off to sickness against the staffing base which meant the figure had currently gone up to 'red', but he would be happy to look into this ahead of the next quarter.

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Councillor Jermy suggested that it might be useful if Members could see the same quarter of the report, shown over a number of years to enable any trends to be spotted as some changes could be due to seasonal changes during the year. He also asked about percentage of household waste recycled and pointed out that Breckland, as a district, was low compared to other districts and there had been no sign of improvement despite local progress and advancement in what items could be recycled. In 2018, there had been a set target, but the target was no longer there. He also had concerns over the tonnage of fly tipping and how this could be improved over the district. Councillor Jermy was also happy to note the improvement in the Contact Centre figures as this had been something that had been closely monitored by the Commission and was the first time in four years that the target had been exceeded.

Councillor Bambridge said he would look into this and respond to Councillor Jermy.

The Innovation and Change Business Partner said he would be happy to look back at previous quarters and respond verbally when presenting the report and agreed to add a further column onto the report to include the previous year's figures for comparison. In terms of household recycling, he would discuss with the Environmental Services Team to see why a target figure was no longer included.

Councillor Birt asked when the Key Performance Indicator review would take place and how the Members of the Commission could be involved with this. Councillor Suggitt suggested that Members should look over the report and what it meant, look at where the figures and targets had been derived from. The Business Team would take back the feedback from this meeting and come back in April with some suggestions. The Chairman suggested a small Task and Finish Group might be appropriate.

Councillor I Martin suggested it would be helpful to display absolute numbers as well as percentages if possible. The Innovation and Change Business Partner agreed to include these figures in the next report.

The report was otherwise noted.

31/21 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Kybird reported that the museums that had opened before the most recent lockdown remained closed and would re-open again in May, which included Gressenhall Workhouse and Farm Museum but not Ancient House at this point.

Councillor Wilkinson reminded Members that Breckland District

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Council had agreed a grant recently to support a mental health programme to be run by the Youth Advisory Board to support families across Norfolk whilst they await results from health providers.

32/21 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)

None.

33/21 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)

None.

34/21 WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Kybird asked if the future report regarding Electric Charging Points could be expanded to include how suitable locations could be found across the district, exactly where they were, and how many there would be at each particular point. The Chairman asked for this information to be included in the report at the next meeting.

The Chairman asked Councillor Turner for her comments on the previously discussed Task and Finish Group to look at flooding issues.

Councillor Turner felt that this did not need to be investigated further but it might be prudent to wait until the next meeting. She explained that there was a Mid-Norfolk Flood Programme being set up in addition to a County Wide Flood Group and felt that there could be some duplication if it was started too early. She felt; however, that there was still a need for a Group to look at infrastructure issues with planning permissions as many systems could not cope with current development.

Councillor Turner suggested that it would be sensible to wait to see what came out of those first meetings as that could change the Terms of Reference and the nature of the work the Group would concentrate on.

The Chairman asked a question in relation to the earlier discussion regarding the Key Performance Indicator review, and whether Members would prefer a small Task and Finish group or to bring the item back to April as an agenda item. Following a vote, Members preferred to bring the matter back as an agenda item in April.

Councillor Birt suggested, as there had been recent issues with Section 106 Agreements, that it would be worthwhile to look at the operations, scrutiny and the consultation processes surrounding this. The Chairman suggested this be added to the 15 July meeting.

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35/21 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting scheduled for Thursday 22 April at 10.00am were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.38 am

CHAIRMAN