

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

Held on Thursday, 29 April 2021 at 2.00 pm

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

In Attendance

Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Resources (Head of Paid Service)
Sarah Barsby	- Assistant Director People and Governance
Jason Cole	- Assistant Director Customer and Performance
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Kathryn Boddy	- Democratic Services Support Officer
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

Outgoing Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual meeting of the Council.

Following the roll call, a short résumé had been prepared in her role as Chairman

Action By

of the Council for the past two years.

When elected as Chairman in 2019, she had been very honoured and had looked forward to her one year of civic events. 2019/2020 had been a busy and exciting year and she had taken every opportunity to raise the profile of Breckland Council across the County and beyond.

When the pandemic hit, nothing was taken for granted anymore. Everyone had to react in ways that could never have been anticipated, and when she agreed to continue as Chairman for a second year it could not have been more different than the first. Events were still being attended via Zoom but that had its advantages - there was no travelling involved, no parking spaces had to be found and there was no need to dress to impress. However, she missed the human contact, not being able to meet up with friends and colleagues in Breckland's local networks. Chairing Full Council meetings via Zoom had been an art in itself and the pandemic had brought sorrow to all. She had written 16 letters of condolence to the families of past councillors, work colleagues and friends of Breckland Council.

The Day of Reflection had been a poignant milestone as had been the sad death of the Duke of Edinburgh. She felt that there was a pattern to life, 10 years ago on the 29 April, a Royal Wedding had taken place, local elections were on-going and sadly her father passed away. Now 10 years on today, 29 April 2021, a Royal Funeral had taken place, Elections were on-going, and it was now the anniversary of her father's death – clearly a pattern.

Without the support of the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Roy Brame and his wife Karen she would have found it difficult to get through these past two years and thanked them both sincerely. She also paid a huge thanks to the team of officers behind the scenes, supporting and encouraging and advising her throughout. To Kathryn, Teresa and Julie in the Democratic Services Team and to the 'legal eagle' Mark Stinson. All had watched her back and had enabled her to do her job to the best of her ability and individual letters had been sent to those Officers to thank them.

She had enjoyed her 2 years all for very different reasons and she wished her successor all the very best for their year ahead.

50/21 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Nominations were invited.

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Roy Brame be elected Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

The Chairman, Councillor Roy Brame in the Chair

Councillor Brame, the newly elected Chairman said that it was an honour to take on this position and he hoped that he could follow in the footsteps of the previous Chairman – a very hard act to follow.

He promised Members that he was going to promote Breckland as a District as a wonderful place to live and he would be promoting Breckland Council as being a very forward thinking and outstanding District Council.

He also took the opportunity to mention that he and Councillor Turner had been the first double act to continue as Chair and Vice-Chair for two years, the first time in Breckland's history.

He felt that it took a special kind of person to be Chairman for one year meeting so many different people and being the face of the Council. Councillor Turner had attended countless events and he felt that she had been an inspiration and had no hesitation when asked if she would continue as Chairman for a further year. She had moved into the virtual world with sheer professionalism since the pandemic and had been a great support to everyone and on behalf of the Council he thanked Councillor Turner for doing such a grand job over the past two years.

The Leader of the Council was the first to congratulate the new Chairman on his new appointment.

The Leader also thanked Councillor Turner for her professionalism and for her fortitude over the last two years, and for her sense of complete commitment from start to finish. She had championed domestic violence and had raised awareness across the District and in turn Breckland had stood ready with its commitment of £1m for its vulnerable programmes. Through her stewardship of the older peoples' forum, continuously looking out for Breckland's communities especially for those who did not necessarily have a strong voice. When the pandemic hit everyone was in a state of flux across the whole of the country as to what was going to happen in respect of democracy for local authorities. Councillor Turner had without hesitation stepped up to the challenge and had been prepared to stand for another year and move the Council into the new world and into the next phase of chairing Council meetings and 'attending' events on-line. Using the technology and the support of Officers and through her patience and caring attitude to everyone across the Council she had performed seamlessly and had allowed democracy, through her stewardship, to continue within Breckland and as Breckland moved into the next phase she had certainly left a lasting legacy.

The Chairman concurred with the Leader's comments.

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Opposition congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment and he hoped that he would have a successful and fulfilling year. He thanked Councillor Turner on behalf of the Labour Group for her hard work and dedication to the role over the last two years. For many residents she had been a constant and a very reassuring presence giving everyone the confidence that the Council was still operating, particularly through her use on social media and video updates. He was going to wish Councillor Turner well for having a little less to do but he knew that no doubt she would quickly fill that void with the many other passions that she was involved in; not least for the support of the older residents across Breckland.

Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets and Councillor Turner's fellow Ward Member also congratulated Councillor Brame on being elected as Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year. He was conscious that most of the words that he had prepared had already been echoed. One year ago, he had been privileged to nominate Councillor Turner as Chairman of the Council for an exceptional second year on the grounds that everyone was heading into uncertain times. A year on, everyone had seen and felt the impact of this pandemic; however, in an unprecedented year that had fundamentally changed the way Members worked, there had always been one constant and that was Councillor Turner. A friend and a confidant to all and a Chairman with sheer determination that embodied a true spirit of this Council and colleagues. He felt

that it had been a privilege to work with her and thanked her for her dedication and commitment.

Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Health & Housing also congratulated Councillor Brame. She also thanked Councillor Turner for her support in a number of areas that had historically caused problems. The last two years had been very challenging, but she felt that Councillor Turner had done an amazing job, having meetings via Zoom and Teams, achieved excellent work with the Daisy Charity and had raised a great deal of money as well as awareness and had brought a great deal of value to that charity. She thanked Councillor Turner for all the help and support she had provided to Members and to the public during these very critical times.

Councillor Bambridge, the Executive Member for Environmental Services & Public Protection also paid thanks to Councillor Turner. It had been two amazing years, the last one being a very difficult year and he appreciated the work that she had done. He also congratulated Councillor Brame in his role as the former Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Kiddell congratulated Councillor Brame and his wife Karen who both would be having another very busy year. On behalf of the new Councillors elected in 2019, she thanked Councillor Turner for making them all feel very welcome in their new roles. Councillor Turner had always been a friendly person to talk too always at the end of the phone and above all else she felt that the work that she had done for carers had been exemplary.

Councillor Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture also congratulated Councillor Brame on becoming Chairman and looked forward to the year ahead with confidence and continuing Councillor Turner's sterling service. He had known Councillor Turner for nearly a decade and during that time he had found her to be very engaging, had offered sound advice and was always open to comment. He wished her a well-earned short break before throwing herself into her next endeavour.

Councillor Turner thanked everyone for their kind words.

51/21 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Nominations were invited.

Councillor Ian Sherwood took this opportunity to congratulate the Chairman and his consort for the year ahead.

He then proposed Councillor Nairn as Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Nairn had served in Her Majesty's Forces for six years and then was a member of the Norfolk Constabulary for 29 years covering West Norfolk, including Thetford, Weeting, Mundford and Watton. He knew the Breckland area exceptionally well and served as the local Councillor for Bedingfeld Ward. He was first elected as a Breckland Councillor in a by-Election in 2012 representing the former Forest Ward and had served his residents for the last 9 years and was sure he would make an excellent Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Wilkinson also congratulated Councillor Brame on his new role as Chairman and also thanked Councillor Turner for her excellent chairmanship these past two years.

Councillor Wilkinson seconded the proposal.

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Mike Nairn be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Nairn on his appointment as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

The Vice-Chairman thanked everyone for their support, and he hoped that he would live up to and surpass his predecessor's reputation in what had been a turbulent second year. He looked forward to representing the best of Breckland in the future and supporting Councillor Brame, the Chairman of the Council.

52/21 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carter, Eagle, Kiddle-Morris and Ian Martin.

53/21 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

54/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

None declared.

55/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Chairman said that he was looking forward to the 'new normal' and announced that following the recent High Court Hearing, face to face meetings would eventually return although Covid restrictions in terms of social distancing etc must be followed. It would be the responsibility of all Councillors to lead Breckland in a safe manner whilst looking after its residents and hopefully, Breckland would be seen as a Council that did take note of Government Policy and the medical world and at the end of this year had set a precedent for others to follow.

He was aware at this point, that the Chairman would normally announce the charity he would be supporting. However, both he and his wife had put a great deal of thought into this matter and felt that mental health was an important issue to tackle. Breckland Council was already supporting community inclusion and therefore, instead of a charity, he was going to have a Chairman's project and would also be supporting community inclusion. He was not aware of how the mental health of the youngsters was going to be affected by this pandemic but felt it would help by promoting these issues. He hoped to get involved with the military in Breckland as he believed that they could provide assistance for various events for young people who had lost their special time in life. All Members could remember taking exams and going to University and passing from childhood to adulthood and he believed that this pandemic had taken that away from young people of a certain age. Therefore, he would be raising money, and raising awareness for community inclusion whilst also being supportive of Breckland Council.

56/21 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Leader made the following announcements:

Covid-19 Pandemic

2020-2021 had been a period dominated by the international pandemic. It had and continued to have an impact on people's lives around the world, and Breckland had been no exception. Those lives that had been lost and those who had worked and volunteered tirelessly to support and protect us all must never be forgotten.

This was a situation that no-one wanted to find themselves in but he had been very proud of this council and how members and officers had tackled this challenge.

Throughout the pandemic, the Council's top priorities, had been clear and unwavering protecting the lives and livelihoods of its residents.

Community

Breckland Council had coordinated a massive relief effort over the last year to help individuals who had been impacted by the pandemic.

This had included releasing almost £20,000 in grants to individuals facing the greatest financial hardship, delivering 200 food parcels to people self-isolating or unable to do their own food shopping, providing significant funding to local foodbanks, and carrying out in excess of 3,000 welfare calls to check-in with some of Breckland's most vulnerable residents during their times of greatest need.

The newly recruited team of Covid Support Officers had been working across the District to provide a reassuring presence, providing advice, and investigating reports of any instances when safety guidance may not have been followed.

Most recently, a Covid Safe Scheme had been launched, that recognised businesses in the District that had put in place measures and working practices to help protect their staff and customers from coronavirus.

Officers had been inspecting Breckland businesses to assess their anti-covid measures, including the provision of protective equipment such as screens and masks, hand sanitiser for staff and customers, and opportunities to maintain social distancing.

The Leader was delighted to announce that the first set of businesses had now been assessed and issued their covid stickers, and he thanked these businesses, and all those across the district who had worked so hard to keep people safe during these challenging times.

Business

The pandemic had hit local businesses hard, and in response the Council had now distributed around £50m in local and national grant funding to help them weather the storm.

This council had also put significant resource, time and effort into helping business-owners navigate the emerging legislation and supporting them to make changes to operate safely, protect customers, protect their staff, and protect local jobs.

£2m had been set aside to help businesses recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The Spring Back support included:

- A Shop Front Improvement Scheme to help pay for a lick of paint or to

- completely replace a shopfront to make local shops more attractive.
- Grants worth up to £5k to help businesses invest in equipment to enable them to trade safely, from extra protective equipment and screens to a marquee or outdoor seating to support social distancing.
- Money and training to help business trade digitally, including new payment systems, websites and online advertising.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Aside from the pandemic response, and despite the challenges and necessary resource it had taken, the last financial year had also seen significant schemes that were hugely important for the District.

These included adopting an inaugural Sustainability Strategy, that pledged for the Council to be carbon neutral by 2035.

An additional £0.5m had been ring-fenced, on top of the hundreds of thousands the Council already spends annually, to deliver a range of 'green' schemes. This included £100k for a community grants scheme to support grassroot environmental projects, £100k for tree planting and similar schemes, and £200k to make the Council's buildings more efficient including switching to a green energy tariff.

Work had begun on converting the former day unit on Elm Road in Thetford into a new temporary accommodation centre for the homeless. The project represented an investment of around £1.8m and would mean that expert support could be provided in new, high-quality temporary emergency accommodation to single adults, couples, and families who need help.

£40,000 had been released to support the launch of the District's first community supermarket, in Thetford. Since its launch at the end of last year, it had gone from strength to strength and had proved to be a real asset to people in the area, helping those people who were struggling to make ends meet, to access good quality food and essentials at reduced prices.

Support continued to Breckland's market towns through its Market Towns Initiative, that had ringfenced £150k per town, over three years to support projects which addressed each of their specific needs and challenges.

Hemingway Design, urban regeneration experts had been commissioned to support the Council's vision work for the future of Thetford, including engagement with local people to help them shape the development of the town.

More recently, 'Future Breckland' Town Delivery Plans project had been launched that would see strategic plans drawn up for each of the towns to help make the case for national funding and align various organisations under one identified vision. This work would shortly get underway focused on Dereham, before engagement opportunities were held in other towns over the course of the coming year.

All this had been achieved over the last 12 months, despite the various challenges including the resignation of the Chief Executive, a strategic review following a decade-long successful strategic partnership that was now coking to a close, and a restructure of the senior management team.

Looking ahead

What did the next 12 months have in store?

Action By

A balanced budget for 2021/22 had already been set that protected frontline services, and whilst other councils may face cuts, Breckland Council would continue to invest in projects to help its towns and surrounding villages to thrive, ring-fencing money to help vulnerable residents, supporting businesses to spring back from coronavirus, and expanding a number of Council teams.

Extra resource was being put into certain Teams within the Council focusing on tackling fly tipping – an area where this Council had already seen great success in tracking down these fly-tippers and handing out many fines - business support, Covid-19, and animal welfare issues.

The £1m+ ringfenced for the Inspiring Communities programme would continue to be honoured, supporting residents susceptible to loneliness in later life, drug gangs, domestic abuse, or poor mental health.

£150k had been set aside for each of the District's five market towns, over three years, to fund projects to help them and their surrounding villages to thrive. The Sustainable Swaffham initiative had recently been launched, aiming to make the town the most environmentally friendly in the county.

£500k had been committed to deliver actions tackling climate change, as mentioned earlier.

£17m would be brought in from national and regional funding to improve local electricity supplies, which would enable housing and business growth – particularly in the south of the district.

Residents' bins would now be collected by a brand-new fleet of collection vehicles, which formed part of the new waste collection contract. That, in itself, had been a unique 3-way commissioning in partnership with peers to the north and west of the county. It also included an enhanced cleaning service in the towns and villages, as well as being able to offer a waste collection service to Breckland's private businesses for the very first time.

This Council had also launched online video appointments and evening sessions for residents to speak to Council staff at a more convenient time particularly if they needed a helping hand with applications or accessing support.

Aside from all the very many projects and initiatives already mentioned, in the last year this Council had also dealt with bomb disposal in the District, making-safe dangerous buildings on the verge of collapse and responding to aviation flu.

This council remained in a very strong position and remained fully focused and fully committed to meeting whatever challenges came its way. Breckland Council would continue to do absolutely everything in its power to make the lives of local people better, to keep them safe and protect their jobs and businesses.

Questions were then invited.

Councillor Jermy thanked the Leader for the significant amount of information provided. He took the opportunity to ask a question in respect of Covid and virtual meetings and asked the Leader if he agreed that the Government's inability to schedule sufficient parliamentary time and the recent loss of the High Court challenge had resulted in the Government failing to support local government. This decision had decreased the rights of residents and of Councillors to scrutinise and hold to account the Councils work with additional costs generated for socially

distancing meetings and in Breckland's case democratic meetings cancelled or postponed that could have easily been held on-line.

The Leader advised that local government would always roll up its sleeves and take on any challenge regardless of what it was. Breckland Council was one of 100s of councils across the country who had embraced the technology to ensure that it was able to undertake its democratic mandate. Nothing had stopped, and at no point throughout the pandemic had Breckland failed to deliver or failed for any decisions to be made or any scrutiny to be undertaken.

He had been disappointed at the High Court's ruling but that did not mean that democracy would not continue. He was pleased that all the chairman of all the Committees had engaged with the Democratic Services Team and was pleased that this Council was moving ahead and looking forward to the 21 June, step 4 of the recovery road map. He was also pleased that this Council had once again proactively invested in its Council Chamber ensuring that it was able to livestream its meetings. No meetings would take place during May, but democracy would not stop and following step 3 of the recovery road map residents and businesses could go out and enjoy the community safely. He would ensure that planning permissions and licensing inspections were still taking place, taxis were still being licensed, housing applications were still being undertaken and the revenues and benefits team were still open; therefore, as far as residents were concerned business would continue as normal.

57/21 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

None received.

58/21 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Councillor Jermy directed his question to Councillor Bambridge, the Executive Member for Environmental Services & Public Protection. He referred to one of the last meetings pre-Covid where a significant decision had been reached in respect of the new Grounds Maintenance Contract for Serco.

He recalled that in the Cabinet and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meetings and indeed the Full Council meeting which all took place on the same day, all Members were reassured that the service provided would be improved, specifically the shredding of litter by Serco grasscutters would end. However, rather than any improvements being made, the situation had worsened and recently it was not the usual cans and glass that were being merrily mowed and torn to shreds but facemasks and two dead pigeons near to a local school. He asked the Executive Member what he would be doing to enforce the rules within the Serco contract to stop and prevent the shredding of litter from occurring.

Councillor Bambridge stated that this was the first that he had heard of this issue, and asked Councillor Jermy if he could send him an email explaining where these incidences were occurring, and he would follow this up and subsequent action would be taken.

Councillor Birt congratulated the Chairman on his appointment. He had two questions to ask, the first of which was directed to the Leader. He referred to page 9 of the agenda pack, a previous question that he had asked of the Leader and the information that should have been forthcoming that had still not been received. He asked the Leader when he could expect this information in respect of the value of

the New Homes Bonus.

The other matter relating to documents that he had previously requested had also not been received. Two responses from Legal Services dated 8 April stated that they would speak to a Director about getting access to these documents but again these had not transpired. Councillor Birt also mentioned a quote in the Constitution which was at variance with the Legal Framework. He could only assume that he was being unlawfully denied access and asked if the Monitoring Officer should be involved with this.

The Leader assured Councillor Birt that he had sent an email on 5 March in response to his question about the New Homes Bonus and if this email had not been received this matter should be taken up with the IT department. Regarding the documentation that was being requested, he would take that away as an action from this meeting but pointed out that no Member was ever prevented from receiving information requested via their Breckland IT equipment and their Breckland email address.

Councillor Colman asked Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets for an update on the sale of the Green Britain Centre in Swaffham.

Councillor Hewett said that he could at some extent without revealing any private & confidential information. Members were informed that just last week the Council had agreed and finalised terms with the bidding organisation which themselves had been agreed by the Board of the bidding organisation for the Green Britain Centre. Unfortunately, their staff needed to be informed before any further announcements could be made. Due diligence, due process and the sale had been completed and he would inform Members of the outcome as soon as he could.

Councillor Morton congratulated the Chairman on his appointment. He also congratulated Councillor Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement and the Member Champion for Climate Change on the Breckland Sustainable Strategy report that had recently been adopted at the Council meeting in February. An organisation called Eunomia had been commissioned to conduct a carbon audit and he asked how this timeline was going to be set up and how it was going to be monitored and reported back to Members.

Councillor Sherwood thanked Councillor Morton for his question and the various correspondence that had been on-going between them. These matters were being looked at within the scale of all the Council's key performance indicators and would be forthcoming. He had not got an exact timeline, but he would get back to Councillor Morton via email with a more definitive time.

Councillor Dowling directed her question to Councillor Bambridge. She pointed out that significant concern had been raised by local residents in Thetford about the felling of mature trees linked to new housing growth in the town and asked what more could be done to prevent so many trees from being cut down and was it right that these trees were being felled in the nesting season.

Councillor Bambridge wanted to know who was cutting down these trees as it seemed more of a planning issue and asked Councillor Dowling to send him an email containing all relevant information and he would get back to her with a response. Councillor Dowling advised that it was assumed that it was Anglian Water along with various different agencies who were felling the trees.

Councillor Brindle congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment. He asked

Action By

the Leader if he had seen the Thetford Facebook entries where there had been a great deal of anger and frustration in respect of Serco not emptying full litter bins. This litter was then blown about and scattered around the bins. He knew that the Leader was aware of this problem and he had been grateful for the responses from Officers that he had received thus far but he hoped that the Leader could reassure everyone that Breckland and Serco would stay on top of this issue particularly as times would get busier during the summer season.

The Leader stated that he and the Waste Team were completely aware of the concerns of residents and Members. This weekend being the bank holiday weekend his message was two-fold – the first was to offer reassurance that extra capacity would be provided in those hotspots and subsequently extra temporary bins would be provided in that locality and additional staff would be working at the weekend as extra support and the routine for those bins being emptied had now increased. Secondly, he urged everyone across the whole of the District to take their litter home if bins in the area were at full capacity.

Councillor Terry also congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment. He asked the Leader a question about small sports clubs that provided youngsters with so many opportunities. Opportunities to get some fresh air and forge new friendships many of which could last a lifetime, but it was the impact these clubs had off the pitch that could not be overstated. In many cases they were quite simply the life blood of their communities which was why it was devastating to learn that over 10% or 4000 clubs nationwide had stated that they would struggle to survive the next 12 months. For too many clubs, Covid-19 had been the final straw. The irony of it all was that this pandemic was slowly wiping out a resource that most parents said that they valued for the physical and mental health benefits. Two of Thetford's major sports clubs, the football club and the neighbouring cricket club were both in a precarious position with both clubs needing funding to upgrade their facilities or risk being demoted to lower leagues that would further reduce their revenue. He welcomed the funding opportunities available to clubs through the Inspiring Communities fund but to access this and indeed other funds such as the lottery funding, skills were needed to complete often complicated application forms. He would be grateful if the Leader could confirm what support was available from Breckland Council for such Groups to apply for funding.

The Leader thanked Councillor Terry for his question. He was pleased that this Government had committed over £195m to support sport and physical activities throughout the pandemic for recovery and this had been disseminated through many organisations whether that was Sports England, the English Cricket Board or the RFU. He knew that two of the clubs and organisations that had been highlighted would be in contact with their local organisation whether that was the Football Federation or the England Cricket Board to work out what funding was available. This Council had had a long standing commitment to support community groups and community organisations and Councillor Terry had highlighted the Inspiring Communities funding that this Council had once again, unlike other Districts that were clawing back on grant funding, had committed over £100k from its budget to ensure that clubs such as the Cricket Club the Football Club, not just in Thetford that Councillor Terry had mentioned but sport clubs and activity clubs across the District could bid for those £5k. If any club was struggling to undertake the application, he urged them to contact the Breckland Team at inspiringcommunities@breckland.gov.uk where they would be pleased to help. Likewise, he was sure that Members across this District were ready to assist with their iPads socially distanced and undertake that application form for them or with them so that no organisations went without that financial support they might need.

Action By

Councillor Borrett asked the Leader if he agreed with him that the commitment of an unsung group of staff who collected rubbish throughout the last year consistently day after day in conditions where at the beginning of this pandemic there was no understanding of the level or degree of risk which they put themselves in by turning up for work, so that they could provide the service to the residents of Breckland. The very fact that this was done without a hitch throughout the absolute worst of the pandemic and indeed all through the lockdowns, there had been a lot said about members of the health service who had given their commitment but he felt that there was an unappreciated group of people who in their commitment did what was not considered to be a very glamorous job but was absolutely vital to the quality of life of people across Breckland in having their rubbish removed and the towns, villages and the countryside in Norfolk. He felt that this group of people had not had the recognition that they deserved, and he applauded all the work that they had done.

The Leader wholeheartedly agreed With Councillor Borrett and felt that it had been remiss of him not to mentioned this before and wanted to put his thanks on record to the Waste Team across the District. He had recently had the pleasure of meeting many of the Waste Teams at the launch of the new Waste Contract at Elizabeth House in Dereham when the new waste lorries had arrived. Hearing some of the concerns that they had raised, that during the first part of the pandemic where everyone was told to stay at home, except health workers and themselves that they were going out regardless day in day out picking up waste and ensuring that communities were clean, vibrant places. As everyone begins to emerge from this pandemic, he hoped that no one would forget the last 14 months and what the Waste Teams had done, and who were still under immense pressure to ensure that the District remained a fantastic community for residents and businesses to thrive. He again wanted to put his thanks on record not just to the Breckland Officers but particularly to those within the Waste Team who had done a sterling job not just in the previous Serco reiteration but would continue to do so over the coming months and years ahead.

Councillor Harvey congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment. He asked Councillor Bambridge if he was satisfied with the level of service from Serco in respect of staffing levels as he had received complaints about the lack of information received when an issue was reported and the lack of a response when the problem was cleared. There was also no facility to upload pictures to the website on the report forms so the lack of evidence could be detrimental. Furthermore, Breckland's green bins were being left by bins for several days leading to animal disturbance and other people dumping even more rubbish.

The Leader responded to this question. He advised that the Council was reviewing the whole 'Report It' function on Breckland's website and that work had recently been undertaken and there would be a facility to upload images using mobile data and residents were encouraged residents to continue to use this function on the website which would continue to be updated. He understood residents' frustrations, and this was the third or fourth question raised in relation to waste, all matters had been heard loud and clear and the Team was responding to those concerns. He asked everyone not to forget these last 14 months, and if those Waste Teams, if they happened to be listening to this meeting, could be feeling a little unappreciated for the work that they had undertaken. The new contract would stand the test of time and Breckland Council was focused on that commitment and the Members and those residents who had raised these concerns directly with Councillor Bambridge, himself or with Senior Officers direct, had been directly submitted to the Serco Team.

Action By

Councillor Atterwill congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment and he hoped that he would enjoy his year and he looked forward to hearing about all his adventures. He did not have a question to ask but he wanted to follow on from what Councillor Borrett had said and wanted to pay tribute to the Fly-tipping Team. He had been in close contact with the Team in respect of an on-going investigation in his parish and believed they were doing a great job for the District. It was very much appreciated by local residents and he wanted his thanks to be put on record.

Councillor Bambridge wanted to respond to Councillor Dowling's earlier concern as he had been sent an email from a Planning Officer since that question had been asked. He was pleased to inform that the trees that were being cut down were under a planning consent granted in December 2020. These trees were being replaced with 10 Oak, 10 Field Maple and 10 Beech semi-mature trees all of which would be planted in the next appropriate season and all would be approximately 4 inches in circumference around the trunk.

Councillor Birt asked Councillor Suggitt, the Executive Member for Governance a question regarding the IT and what went wrong with the IT system that caused the cancellation of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting and what measures had been put in place to avoid a reoccurrence.

In response, Councillor Suggitt explained that the issues that Members faced recently had not been a Breckland Council IT issue. This had been a global issue in respect of Microsoft and affected an Outlook update that consequently affected some of the IOS systems and Members were unable to access their diaries to retrieve the Zoom invite to that meeting. The IT Team had worked really hard and had been waiting for the 'patch' to come through from Microsoft that was not received until later on that evening and to make matters worse some of the updates did not go through automatically therefore the Team had to work quickly over a couple of days to contact the 19 Members that had been in touch with the IT Helpdesk to manually rectify these issues. No new measures had to be put in place but the IT Team was now looking to put together a text messaging service alongside the current email distribution list.

Councillor Jermy wanted to follow up on the Serco concerns and asked the Leader if he realised that these problems with Serco were not purely limited to bank holidays and was not a one-off - these were significant on-going issues. He also asked Councillor Borrett if he realised that it was precisely due to the welfare of the Serco Operators that Members were raising these concerns. It was detrimental to the Operators well-being when they were having to pick up broken glass and shredded cans and having spoken to a number of Serco staff on the street, they were experiencing an impossible task and an impossible situation trying to keep all places clean. It was precisely because of those concerns to welfare that these points were being raised.

The Leader stated that Councillor Jermy had ran successful community groups and businesses across the market town of Thetford and was well aware that if the 'left hand' did not talk to the 'right hand' the issues that had been highlighted would sadly result in a breakdown in communication between operatives on the ground. It had nothing to do with the Contract and nothing to do with individuals and it was quite right and proper for Members to raise any concerns at these Full Council meetings under Questions without Notice. He urged Members to work together collectively to ensure that the Breckland District was a clean, safe, vibrant place and ensure that the feedback was not just critical but offering that feedback in a constructive manner on what those issues and concerns were. He was grateful to Councillor Jermy for the work he had done with Officers and the local Serco Team

to raise these concerns.

The Chairman advised all Members that this agenda item was limited to 30 minutes and was not a debate it was for Members to be able to ask questions due to matters happening in their Wards that may not be known to other Members or the Portfolio Holders. The place to have a debate or raise a political point was at Committee meetings to make Members aware and that Policies were followed.

59/21 COMMITTEE MINUTES (FOR INFORMATION ONLY) (AGENDA ITEM 10)

(a) Planning Committee

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 12 April 2021 were noted.

60/21 ANNUAL APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN 2021-2022 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

Maxine O'Mahony, the Executive Director for Governance congratulated Councillor Brame on his appointment and wished him all the best for his term in office this year.

In accordance with the Constitution, the report sought Members' agreement to approve the annual appointments of Councillors to Committees and to appoint the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for the ensuing year.

Councillor Claussen the Deputy Leader nominated the following Conservative Members to the new Shared Memorandum of Agreement Committee. The nominations were duly seconded.

Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen (Con)
Councillor Paul Claussen (Con)
Councillor Sarah Suggitt (Con) (sub)
Councillor Ian Sherwood (Con) (sub)

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group nominated the following Labour Members to the new Shared Memorandum of Agreement Committee. All other Committee seats would remain the same.

Councillor Jermy (Lab)
Councillor Clarke (Lab) (sub)

Councillor Birt was content with the appointments to the various Committee as obviously this was just a procedural matter, but the recommendations came in two forms and asked if the recommendations could be taken separately as although he was content as to who had been appointed, he was less happy about the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for all of the Committees. He felt that perhaps this could be an aspect that had not been discussed previously and therefore did not support the second recommendation.

The Chairman explained that as far as he was aware the Constitution stated that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of all Committees were either appointed by the Leader or each Committee could vote for their own.

Councillor Atterwill was happy to confirm that the Independent Members nominated for Committees still stood as per the report. He also asked that when the vote was

taken would Members be voting on a 'Committee by Committee' basis as it could be that most were happy with the makeup of some Committees and not others. With this in mind, he felt that Members should be able to vote accordingly and asked for advice from the Monitoring Officer, Maxine O'Mahony.

The Chairman agreed to this request as in his opinion this was just about recommending that the Committees have Chairman and Vice-Chairmen.

The Executive Director for Strategy & Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that the recommendations should be taken enbloc as each Committee was able to make their own decisions going forward. Members were asked to vote for the changes or against them.

The recommendations were then taken enbloc as advised but any Member who wished to vote against a particular Committee were asked to indicate as such.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above appointments:

1. the Council appoints for 2021-2022 the Committees and Panels as set out in Appendix A of the report; and
2. the Council approves the re-appointment of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of those Committees and Panels as set out in Appendix A of the report.

Councillors Birt, Jermy, Morton, Atterwill, Clarke and Gilbert voted against the first recommendation in respect of the composition of the Local Plan Working Group but agreed all other appointments.

Councillor Birt also voted against the second recommendation.

61/21 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2021/22 (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The Executive Director for Governance presented the annual report.

Councillor Birt had a query on item 6.1.1 of the report. He was very pleased that the Council was now looking at these carbon footprint implications and quoted the said paragraph but was slightly concerned that it stated that travelling to these Outside Body meetings would have an impact on the 'individual's' carbon footprint and not the 'Council's' footprint. Being that these were official appointments, and these Members were acting on behalf of the Council he felt that the impact should also be on the Council's carbon footprint.

The Executive Director for Governance was sure that the wording could be amended to accommodate Councillor Birt's request.

Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy, the Council's Legal Advisor agreed.

Councillor Ian Sherwood said that he would be happy to take this matter away for further consideration.

It was proposed and seconded that the following wording be added to paragraph 6.1.1:

Councillors are expected to travel to meetings of outside bodies, which can have an impact on the **Council's carbon footprint** and the individual's carbon footprint.

Action By

Subject to the above amendment, it was:

RESOLVED that the representatives on the list of Outside Bodies be appointed.

Councillor Monument abstained from voting on this matter.

62/21 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 13)

None.

63/21 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (AGENDA ITEM 14)

None.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their support.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

CHAIRMAN