

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

**Held on Thursday, 19 January 2012 at 10.30 am in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mrs S Armes	Mr K. Martin
Mr S. Askew	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs K. Millbank
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mrs L.H. Monument
Councillor C Bowes	Mr T F C Monument
Mr A.J. Byrne	Mrs J A North
Mr C G Carter	Mr J.W. Nunn
Mr T R Carter	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr R.P. Childerhouse	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr P.D. Claussen	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr P R W Darby	Mr S. J. F. Rogers
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr B. Rose
Mr B J English	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr R.F. Goreham (Vice- Chairman)	Mr B J Skull
Councillor E. Gould	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mr S R Green	Mrs P.A. Spencer
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mrs E. M. Jolly	Mr N.C. Wilkin (Chairman)
Mr C.R. Jordan	Mr D.R. Williams JP
Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris	

Also Present

Mr M Eveling - Chairman of Standards Committee

In Attendance

Julie Britton	- Senior Committee Officer
Mark Finch	- Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Terry Huggins	- Chief Executive
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer

1/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2011 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the penultimate sentence of Minute No. 127/11 being amended to read: "Deputy *Mayor* of Dereham".

2/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Lady K Fisher, Mrs P. Quadling, Mrs A. Steward, Mr C. Clark, Mr R. Duffield, Mr R Kybird and Mr T. Lamb.

Action By

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3/12 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Mr P. Cowen declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11 by virtue of him being an Architect in practice.

Mr R. Childerhouse declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11 due to the representations he made during the process of the Site Specifics document.

4/12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Chairman wished all Members a Happy New Year.

He congratulated Councillor Carl Clark on being chosen as one of the people to carry the Olympic torch.

On behalf of all Members he made a presentation to Mr Goreham, the former Leader of the Labour Group.

5/12 CABINET MINUTES - 10 JANUARY 2012 (AGENDA ITEM 5)

1) Rollout of EAST ACTIVE Project to Generate Income (Minute No. 8/12)

The Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development said that the project had helped small businesses to save £2.25m and cut their CO₂ emissions by 11,000 tonnes avoiding infringement fines. The proposed business case would allow the expansion of the project across the East of England. Two other Councils were already very interested.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) an East Active Full Business Case be developed and submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG);
- (2) the funding be accepted (if the Business Case is successful) and, subject to all other funding being secured, set up the appropriate income and expenditure budgets to allow the project to proceed;
- (3) three additional staff be employed (an Area Manager and two part time administration/technical support posts – one in Luton and one in Breckland) to deliver the project (these posts would be 100% funded from the Project income); and the existing REV ACTIVE Project Manager's post be extended and reconfigured to December 2015 (this post would also be 100% funded from the Project income).

2) Alternative Car Park Policy Feasibility (Minute No. 9/12)

The Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development pointed out a correction saying that the last sentence of the penultimate paragraph on page 165 should say that the figure did **not** include refurbishment and running costs.

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A Dereham Member was concerned that the introduction of parking fees would have an adverse effect on the economic viability of the town. The Council had always prided itself on supporting economic development and he believed free parking provided a stimulant for the local economy.

The Chairman pointed out that the item was about releasing money for a feasibility study and not about charging.

An Independent Member proposed that the Council should allow time for a full, open and free debate on accepting the principle of car park charging.

Another Member pointed out that the Council had previously been criticised for not charging by the Audit Commission. Although he was not in favour of charging he accepted that times and circumstances were changing and he agreed that the Council should proceed with the study.

This view was supported by a Member who said that everyone was concerned but the issue had to be worked through to find a solution.

The Leader of the Labour Group said it was an issue that cut across all political persuasions and very few people supported the idea of the study, let alone charging. As the Leader of the opposition he did not set the budget, but he did not think it was the right time to make this decision. He seconded the earlier proposal.

The Leader of the Council disagreed with his comments saying that the Leader of the Labour Group had every right to put forward ideas about the budget. He asked all Members to come forward with suggestions.

The Chief Executive sought to clarify the situation saying that the decision to carry out the study had been resolved by Cabinet, and was not a recommendation to Council. The only way for Members to question that decision was through the Call-In procedure.

He added that in view of the Autumn Statement the Council was facing a considerable reduction in funding from Central Government and they had to consider all options. He did not want to be in a position of not knowing all the information to allow a reasoned response to enquiries about the possibility of car park charging, which is why the study was necessary.

3) Budget, Financial Medium Term Plan and Capital Strategy (Minute No. 10/12)

The Executive Member for Finance and Democratic Services was pleased to present the Budget for 2012/13 to the Council.

Due to the reduction in Local Government Settlement and the Council Tax freeze it was a very challenging time. It was imperative that the Council took a strategic view to managing its finances. To deliver a budget which would support the Council's key priorities,

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with the emphasis being on protecting front line services, a programme of service reviews was being carried out. Key milestones in that process were identifying immediate savings, reviewing staff vacancies and reviewing fees, charges, contracts and income generation potential. He handed over to the S151 Officer to provide more detail of the process.

The S151 Officer gave a short presentation covering the key aspects of the Budget report explaining the assumptions that had been made to inform the decisions.

The Executive Member thanked the S151 Officer and the Finance Team for delivering a balanced budget for the next two years, which he commended to the Council.

A Member sought clarification of the amount left in the General Fund and was advised that of the £4m available, it was proposed to move £2 into a Council Tax Reserve, leaving £2m in the General Fund.

The Leader of the Council explained that Business Rates were to be localised in 2013 and could be collected and redistributed locally. Due to the fact that that revenue might fluctuate it was felt necessary to have the Reserve as a buffer until the implications of the changes were fully understood.

A former holder of the Finance Portfolio supported moving the reserve to provide a stability mechanism. He said that Members and Officers had done well to deliver services and maintain finances. He thought that the Council was better placed than many others and had fundamental strength and stability.

An Independent Member commented on the income generated from the Council's commercial property. He congratulated the Economic Development Team on a job well done.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that they had reluctantly accepted the redundancies although he felt some had been rushed. He felt the same about Shared Services, which was good in principle, but he was concerned that the Council was moving towards a third partner too quickly. He asked if the risks had been fully considered. With regard to car parking he felt that it was an important function of the Council to consider the economic viability of its communities and suggested that an increase of just £6 per year on Council Tax would raise more money than car park charges.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission said that they had recently discussed Discretionary Services to consider what the Council did, how it did it and whether it should be done differently. Commercial Development was a Discretionary Service and it provided a huge benefit to the Council and to ratepayers. It showed that the Council needed to look at all the options to appreciate all the implications. The Commercial Property Team encouraged investment in Breckland which would impact on Business Rates. More must be done to encourage that. He asked Members to be pro-active and support the Scrutiny process which advised both Cabinet and Council.

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RESOLVED that:

- (1) the Breckland revenue estimates and Parish Special Expenses for 2012-13 and outline position through to 2016-17 (as set out in Appendix B of the report) be approved;
 - (2) the capital estimates and associated funding for 2012-13 and outline position through to 2016-17 (as set out in appendix I of the report) be approved;
 - (3) the revised capital estimates and associated funding for 2011-12 (as set out in appendix I) be approved;
 - (4) the fees and charges shown at appendices E & E2 of the report be adopted on 1 April 2012;
 - (5) the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2012-13 be set at £64.05 (as set out in appendix B of the report);
 - (6) the Financial Medium Term Plan at Appendix A of the report be approved; and
 - (7) the Capital Strategy as at Appendix H of the report be approved.
- 4) Thetford Riverside Regeneration Project (Minute No. 17/12)

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the funding as requested be released; subject to due diligence being completed;
 - (2) the grant from Norfolk County Council Infrastructure Fund be accepted subject to acceptable Heads of Terms;
 - (3) a Special Cabinet be held on Thursday, 9 February 2012 at 9.30am in the Anglia Room to legally complete and sign off the Agreement to Lease (if agreed); and
 - (4) the Audit Committee be commissioned to monitor the contract and any financial risks associated with the project.
- 5) Adoption
- Subject to Mr P. Cowen being added to the attendance list, the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 January 2012 were adopted.

6/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 5 JANUARY 2012
(AGENDA ITEM 6)

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 5 January 2012 be adopted.

Action By

7/12 PLANNING COMMITTEE - 19 DECEMBER 2011 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 19 December 2011 be adopted.

8/12 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE - 4 JANUARY 2012 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

1) Community Services Restructuring (Minute No. 6/12)

RESOLVED that the proposed restructure to the Community Development service at Breckland Council be approved.

2) ICT Review (Minute No. 7/12)

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the new ICT staff structure be approved; and
- (2) the results of the JE process and financial implications be agreed.

3) Legal Review (Minute No. 8/12)

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the two Council Leaders and the Chief Executive to sign off the restructure following formal consultation with staff and unions to ensure the restructure and efficiency savings could be achieved in 2012/13 onwards.

4) HR Review (Minute No. 9/12)

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the structure of the existing HR Team establishment be reduced by 0.6FTE; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to make one redundancy, subject to the outcomes of the consultation and selection process.

(5) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 January 2012 be adopted.

9/12 STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 3 JANUARY 2012 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 3 January 2012 be adopted.

10/12 YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES - 20 DECEMBER 2011 (FOR INFORMATION) (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 20 December 2011 were noted.

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11/12 ADOPTION OF THE SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES AND PROPOSALS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) AND UPDATED PROPOSALS MAPS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development presented the report.

The process had started in 2008 and following various consultations and Task & Finish Group meetings to ascertain the views of the Parishes and public, an Examination in Public had been held in July 2011. The Inspector had asked for an additional consultation on parish boundaries and a further consultation on site allocation in Shipdham. Following that consultation the Inspector had revised his opinion and the residents of Shipdham had got what they wanted.

The Inspector had made one slight change to the document. Due to the Localism Bill now being law, the Council was no longer bound to adopt changes proposed by the Inspector, however in this case the change to the Settlement Boundary for Shropham was recommended for approval.

RESOLVED that the Breckland Site Specific Policies and Proposals DPD as submitted, including all of the amendments recommended in the Inspector's Report, be adopted.

12/12 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 12)

RESOLVED that the following appointments be approved:

1. Mr S. Rogers to replace Mr Wassell on the Audit Committee.
2. Mr Wassell to replace Mr S. Rogers on the Planning Committee.

The meeting closed at 11.35 am

CHAIRMAN