

Public Document Pack
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

Held on Thursday, 21 January 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

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mrs L.S. Turner (Chairman) | Mr C. Harvey |
| Mr R. F. W. Brame (Vice-Chairman) | Mr P.J. Hewett |
| Mr T. J. Ashby | Mrs J. James |
| Mr S Askew | Mr T. J. Jermy |
| Mr R. Atterwill | Cllr T. Kiddell |
| Mr S.G. Bambridge | Mr M. Kiddle-Morris |
| Mr T. Birt | Mr R.G. Kybird |
| Mr W.P. Borrett | Mr K. Martin |
| Councillor C. Bowes | Mrs L.H. Monument |
| Mr M. P. Brindle | Mr P. Morton |
| Miss H. Bushell | Mr M. J. Nairn |
| Mr T. R. Carter | Mr J.W. Nunn |
| Councillor M. Chapman-Allen | Mr D. R. R. Oliver |
| Mr S. H. Chapman-Allen | Mr M. S. Robinson |
| Mr H. E. J. Clarke | Mr I. Sherwood |
| Mr P.D. Claussen | Mrs S. E. Suggitt |
| Mr J.P. Cowen | Miss T. Taylor |
| Mrs H Crane | Mr S. Terry |
| Mr R.W. Duffield | Mrs A. M. Webb |
| Mr P.J. Duigan | Mr D. Wickerson |
| Mr F. Eagle | Mr N.C. Wilkin |
| Mr K.S. Gilbert | Mr P. S. Wilkinson |
| Mrs K. Grey | |

In Attendance

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Alison Chubbock | - Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC) |
| Maxine O'Mahony | - Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer) |
| Rob Walker | - Executive Director Place |
| Mark Stinson | - Executive Manager Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer) |
| Rory Ringer | - Democratic Services Manager |
| Teresa Smith | - Democratic Services Team Leader |
| Julie Britton | - Democratic Services Officer |

1/21 VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with Standing Order 5.1 of the Council's Constitution, the Chairman announced that the order of business would be changed. Questions on Notice would be discussed following agenda item 3.

Action By

It was noted that any supplementary questions asked by those Members who submitted the original questions, would be taken in the following order:

- Councillor Birt
- Councillor Clarke
- Councillor Morton

2/21 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colman, Dale, Dowling and I Martin.

3/21 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Subject to one abstention, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

4/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None declared.

5/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

As everyone continued to work their way through this pandemic, the Chairman wished to record the Council's thanks to all those who had kept services going in the Breckland communities. She had received many thanks from the public who had been grateful for a grant, for information, reassurance and for their bins being emptied. Additionally, following the Christmas jumper day, over £1400 had been raised for the Daisy Programme in Watton.

The Chairman then shared with Members sad passing of six people who all in different ways had been associated or had worked for Breckland Council. On behalf of all Members, a letter or a card of condolence had been sent to all their families.

Former Councillor and Chairman of the Council, Mr Paul Ison who had represented the Swaffham Ward from 1976 to 1987. Former Councillor Jill Ball who represented the then named Wissey Ward and who had sat on several committees during her term of office from 2007 to 2011.

PC Colin Lake, Glen Chapman former Breckland/South Holland Officer, Emily Millington-Smith MBE and Linda Heanue. Emily and Linda had been instrumental in working to get the voices of older people heard in Norfolk and Breckland.

As a mark of respect, a minute's silence was held.

Members were then reminded of the many training opportunities that were available on-line on the Members' page and all were encouraged to take part.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be attending a number of on-line civic events in the near future so that a healthy and informative connection remained between other authorities and agencies whilst also raising the profile of Breckland Council.

6/21 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

As it was the first meeting of 2021, the Leader wished everyone a belated Happy New Year.

Unfortunately, 2021 had begun in very much the same way as 2020 had ended, but with the vaccination programme now in full swing and people continuing to abide by the National Lockdown Guidance, the Leader was pleased to say that 2021 was beginning to look much brighter.

He was aware that local flooding over the previous weeks had impacted many residents across Breckland. If there was an immediate risk to life, residents must dial 999 for support and contact Norfolk County Council as the Lead Flood Authority at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/>, to allow plans to be put in place where these flooding issues re-occurred.

Breckland Council continued to support its residents and local businesses as well as supporting the NHS and Norfolk Public Health sharing information in respect of the vaccine rollout, local testing guidance to ensure that all residents and loved ones remained safe.

In respect of the vaccine rollout, this was being led by the National Health Service and Norfolk CCG, there were several GP sites across Breckland already vaccinating and all were doing a sterling job at a local level. The first large vaccination site was due to be rolled out across Breckland as well as further smaller sites over the coming weeks. This would ensure that those most vulnerable and particular priority groups would be vaccinated followed by the rest of society. Anyone who had any questions or concerns about the vaccine roll-out were encouraged to visit the following website:

<https://norfolkandwaveneyccg.nhs.uk/contact>

People were encouraged **not** to contact their local GP practice to arrange an appointment as someone from the health service would contact them when their appointment was due.

Breckland District Council had taken the lead on many activities that were making a great deal of difference to local peoples' lives and their livelihoods. Approximately 10,000 individual grants had been issued to businesses within the District affected by this pandemic and more grants were being provided every single day. Businesses were able to contact their local Ward Member or the Council itself for further information via the website: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/>.

Thus far, £35m worth of grants had been awarded to Breckland businesses to ensure that they were protected and supported, and further monies would be available over the coming days and weeks. In addition to the national and local grant funding that had already been distributed. Breckland Council had also earmarked over £1m towards its market town investment to support High Street businesses to bounce back financially in what had been the most difficult year.

In terms of supporting the communities, Officers and Covid Support Officers within the Council were helping to deliver the local enhanced track & trace system. This involved speaking to residents on their doorsteps making sure that contact had been made and making sure that those who had tested positive had been provided with support and were complying with the isolation rules. Since 15 January 2021, over 60 visits had been carried out - helping to stop the spread of the virus and

providing further welfare support to those who needed it.

This welfare support included financial aid, access to essential supplies, loneliness and befriending support and of course mental health advice, guidance as well as providing transport options if required for travelling to local vaccination centres.

The Leader then took the opportunity to thank all communities whether in paid employment, volunteers or looking after neighbours and friends. Without this support the most vulnerable would not be protected. As part of the Council's response to Covid, the Council's local community hub was still operational and was still providing emergency food parcels, food bank vouchers, registering vulnerable people for supermarket delivery slots as well as local hardship grants. Members were asked if they knew of any residents within their Wards who were struggling to make them aware of the vast array of assistance available and to report such matters directly to the Council.

Whilst the Covid response was at the top of the Council's priority list, the Leader was pleased to announce that essential services continued to be delivered at pace with 80% to 90% of its services being run at full capacity and all Officers were thanked for continuing to work in some hard and difficult conditions. These were excellent examples that highlighted once again that Breckland Council remained open for business with a bright and growing future ahead.

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group thanked the Leader and the Team who had been managing the emergency contact line and who had answered his call on Boxing Day in respect of flooding issues. He wanted to know who supplied the sandbags as he had always understood that this was a County function. However, since then, and in response to a recently submitted Cabinet question, he had been informed that this was the responsibility of the District Council.

He was aware of the rising river levels and had received many calls of concern from residents and he asked the Leader for an update on where people should go or who to contact for sandbags and whether any guidance on such matters could be issued going forward.

The Leader thanked Councillor Jermy and those Members and colleagues who had supported people affected by flooding over Christmas and the New Year. Breckland Council did have a stock of sandbags but had been depleted at pace over the festive period. All stock had since been replenished and he encouraged those residents who could be at risk to contact Defra via their website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-defra> to find out if their area was at risk of flooding and how to prepare for such an incident.

Sandbags could also be purchased and bags full of soil could be used to prevent flood water entering properties. If there was an immediate risk to life or property, residents and businesses should call 999 for support or contact their local Council for advice just as Councillor Jermy had done.

Additionally, should there be a major incident or emergency, part of the process was the recovery, and Rob Walker, the Executive Director of Place was the lead person to contact along with other Officers within the Council, to ensure that the process put in place for such incidents had been fit for purpose.

Councillor Clarke wanted to publicly thank the Council and Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Housing for the additional recent donation of £2.5k in

addition to the generous donation of £10k. The £2.5k additional funding had been match funded by Dereham Town Council. As a result of the pandemic, the Mid Norfolk food bank increased its space due to the extra demand and 2,000 families had already been supported. This had been very much appreciated.

The Leader felt that this was a very positive piece of news. For the past year, Breckland Council had supported organisations such as the Dereham Food Bank with thousands of pounds for those in hardship and would continue to support those in need. He felt that this showed that District Councils and local Government had a really important role to play in supporting their communities and businesses.

Councillor Gilbert referred to the question asked by Councillor Terry in respect of flooding and sandbags. He informed Members that a flood action group had been set up in Watton, the Watton & Saham Toney Flood Action Group. The Group worked independently of the Council but with its support. Although he had been under the impression that Breckland Council did not supply sandbags it was good to know that the Council did have a strategic supply, but it would also be good to know where people could get them from and if they were available in each of the towns.

The Leader advised that he was not aware of the operational details or the exact location of the sandbags throughout the District, but he encouraged Members to sign up to the Environment Agencies Flood Alert System as he had done. This exact same system was used by the Emergency Planning Officers and as soon as an alert came through of incidents across the District they would immobilise and work out where their resources were most needed; this could be in the form of manpower, sandbags, respite centres, hotels or B&Bs. He asked Councillor Gilbert if he had any concerns about emergency planning to contact the Council during working hours or, as Councillor Jermy did, contact the out of hours Team where the Duty Officer who was on standby 24 hours a day 365 days a year would allocate resources to where it was needed most.

The Council was waiting for its stock of sandbags to be replenished and as part of the wash up sessions being held would be to review its stock requirements across the District.

As a Ward Member, the Chairman advised that those across the District that had their own emergency plans within the villages or towns had proved to be well worth their weight in gold during these difficult times. If there had been an issue, the local Emergency Plan committee had gone straight into action, there was also a supply of kit on standby to assist people in need. It was everyone's responsibility to think about how they could be a little more resilient around where they lived.

Councillor Morton asked the Leader if he could provide or point to where the figures might be in terms of how much work the Council was doing in respect of test & trace and how efficiently it was being done in terms of contacts.

The Leader did not have this information to hand, but he would seek support from the Council's public health colleagues at Norfolk County Council and the Council's local track & trace team to see if something of use could be provided to Councillor Morton.

7/21 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

This item was discussed following agenda item 3.

The Questions on Notice including the responses had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting (see attached).

The three Members who submitted the questions were invited to ask one supplementary question in accordance with the Council's Constitution, as follows:

Councillor Birt raised a concern in respect of the questions and responses not being included on the agenda and therefore not being available to the public. He then asked Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets to disclose the exact value of the Council's investment, the Green Britain Centre, and to disclose how much money had been lost in this sale.

In response, Councillor Hewett felt that his previous written response had clearly answered the question; however, Breckland Council had disposed of a building, a building that had been an iconic part of the Swaffham skyline. In its prime, it had brought employment, visitors, and income to the town but for the past two years the building had remained empty. During this time, for the past 18 months, the Council had been in discussions with the Town Council developing a vision, a community and leisure offering that would be more suited to the town and to its aspirations. This vision had since been dashed albeit for a positive reason and, as a result of the sale, employment and growth could be offered to the town and an alternative location for the Town Council's vision would be sought.

Councillor Hewett believed that by sharing resources, as a Council, and as Councillors, and as part of the Breckland wider community, everyone could be a part of that vision for Swaffham and he did not intend to apologise to Councillor Birt for supporting the economic aspirations of the town.

Councillor Birt was asked to put any further questions in writing which would be dealt with accordingly.

Councillor Clarke's supplementary question was in respect of the Chairman's Panel meetings and the subsequent review. He felt that any discussions or outcomes that took place between the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Officers and the Executive Member for Planning should be shared with Planning Committee Members, this would then provide an opportunity for those Members to put their views forward at the same time.

Councillor Morton asked Councillor Alison Webb, the Executive Member for Housing a supplementary question in respect of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme. He hoped that the application for funding would be successful as it met the necessary criteria of the scheme. If not, he asked the Executive Member for Housing to confirm if the Council would be in a position to support a further bid through the Local Energy Hub scheme.

In response, Councillor Webb also hoped that the application was successful. She pointed out that every time the Council applied for different funding applications, if unsuccessful, the applications were always looked at again as well as requesting feedback from the relevant bodies. Members were reassured that all schemes that were available that benefited Breckland's communities were considered and applied for accordingly. Any news/progress on the Green Homes Grant application would be forwarded to Councillor Morton.

Councillor Morton had submitted a second question on notice so was entitled to a put forward a second supplementary question.

He had noted that the Council had a Carbon Audit report due to be released shortly, that would most probably look into the position of charging points and he asked Councillor Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement & Member Champion for Breckland Sustainable Strategy if he would take the lead on this that would provide people with the confidence to purchase such vehicles.

Councillor Sherwood thanked Councillor Morton for his question as this provided him with the opportunity to apologise as he had announced at a recent Cabinet meeting that the Carbon Audit report would be sent to Members forthwith. Unfortunately, a number of typographical errors plus some broken links had been spotted in the report and once corrected, would be sent to all Members via email. In respect of charging points, the Team was currently looking at all suitable options in support of the 'Green' programme.

8/21 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group asked the Leader a question in respect of grants. It seemed to him to be much more complicated due to the different tiers and different amounts and he asked the Leader if he could provide reassurance that the Team managing these grants had sufficient capacity to distribute this money in a timely manner. He had spoken to a number of businesses in Thetford who were obviously concerned as these grants had been a lifeline to them.

In response, the Leader advised that he had regular meetings with the Executive Directors to discuss resources across the organisation and as such they had daily meetings with their Teams within every service area to discuss the same. He had not been informed of any resource issues within the Council but asked Councillor Jermy if he knew of any delays to contact the Regeneration Team via their generic email address or as Member such issues could be raised with the relevant Officer directly or via himself as the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Birt had two questions to ask, the first one was directed to the Leader. He felt that for many months, many issues that he had raised had not been totally agreed with, but he hoped, at this meeting today, that some common ground could be found and asked the Leader if he would agree that employment was the best way out of poverty for most working age people, and working close to where they lived, benefited both the employee and the environment by reducing travel.

The Leader agreed, getting a job and a better career was the way out of poverty for everyone. In relation to the locality of employment and residential locations, there was a mix, but people had the right to live where they chose to live and should not be curtailed or restrained. However, through the Planning system and the Council's Local Plan where it was placing growth sites for employment, the residential sites should be intrinsically linked not just through their close proximity but also near to public transport and walking and cycling too. These were some of the comments made by Members which were fed back in response to the recent Planning White Paper consultation and the exact same comments that he himself had made previously to the Right Honourable Christopher Pinch MP, the Minister for Planning.

Councillor Birt's second question was directed to Councillor Ian Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement and Climate Change. Councillor Birt stated that he had recently received the draft Carbon Audit report but was slightly concerned, even though it was a draft copy, that the report, in his opinion, seemed

to be making decisions rather than setting out the Council's position and provided some examples. The document itself he had noticed had been produced on the 15th December 2020 and he asked why this had taken so long for Members to see sight of the draft.

In response, Councillor Sherwood advised that the report was to inform, advise and help all Councillors on the most challenging issues for any Council and society had to deal with over the coming decades. These were not decisions; it was advice, and the report was not sent to Members over the Christmas period as most would have been taking a well-earned break. He and the Officer involved had looked at the initial report and had identified some typographical errors and some broken links contained within the report and the company had been asked to correct these errors. As such, the final report would be emailed to all Members in the very near future.

Councillor Clarke's question related to flooding. He asked the Leader if he welcomed the decision made at a recent Norfolk County Council Cabinet meeting to establish a new Flood Management Strategy. The decision made was to re-establish partnerships within the District and he asked the Leader if he would agree to commit resources in an effort to ensure that all Councillors in Breckland would be able to have some form of input into this. Furthermore, where this Council had its own powers, to exercise them where it could in respect of blocked ditches etc.

The Leader was aware of the decision but had not, as yet, seen sight of the document. He pointed out that there was an item being raised at the Norfolk Leaders Forum in relation to flooding across the District, this involved working with Anglian Water and Essex Water and other key partners and organisations. He would be more than happy to share this information with all Councillors once more was known and how Breckland and its Members could proactively engage in this to ensure that the Council was protecting its residents and businesses.

Councillor Brindle mentioned the improvements that were being made to the river system in Thetford and was pleased to hear that there was likely to be a jetty built on Breckland land along the river. He asked the Leader if he could confirm that the jetty would be open and be free to all Thetford residents to use at all times.

The Leader was not aware of the detailed conditions in relation to that access permit granted by the Council's Assets Team for the jetty itself. He was aware that the business owner was trying to ratify some insurance related issues and he would be more than happy to respond to Councillor Brindle and other Thetford Members once more information was found.

Councillor Atterwill directed his first question to Councillor Paul Claussen, the Executive Member for Planning. He asked if the Building Control department was sufficiently resourced at this time to best serve the District.

Councillor Claussen advised that Building Control was short of staff but a recruitment exercise was already underway.

Councillor Atterwill's second question related to the Green Britain Centre in Swaffham and was directed to Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets.

He asked Councillor Hewett if he would commit to provide Members with a financial report detailing the original capital outlay and the subsequent capital receipt that had been realised by its recent sale.

Members were informed that Councillor Hewett had already left the meeting due to other work commitments and therefore the question would be dealt with by the Leader.

The Leader explained that the Council had approximately 240 assets across the District and surrounding areas. The Facilities Team acquired and disposed of such assets on a regular basis to ensure that the Council was getting the best revenue streams to support and protect frontline services. In respect of the Green Britain Centre, this had been a decision taken by the Cabinet Member in consultation with local Ward Members and Councillor Atterwill was reassured that such information would be provided to him in due course on the building's acquisition and its subsequent disposal.

Councillor Terry, as a school governor, had concerns about food poverty and how it impacted on children's education. This remained a major issue in the District. He was also aware that many families did not apply mainly due to thinking that they were not eligible for free school meals. He asked the Leader if there was anything that the Council could do to encourage these people to sign up.

Members were informed that the Government had awarded millions of pounds to upper tier authorities across the country to support food poverty and Norfolk County Council was the responsible authority for this area. He was aware that Officers were working at pace to support individuals and families across the County who had been impacted by the current pandemic. In relation to the free school meals, for those who had not taken up the offer, as part of Breckland Council's vulnerability support network, and through the Communications Team, families and individuals alike were being made aware of what help was available. Norfolk County Council had also re-advertised the food hardship scheme prior to Christmas but he would raise this matter again with Councillor Proctor, the Leader of Norfolk County Council.

The Chairman said that she worked closely with the headteacher of a school nearby in her Ward and often provided information or pointed them in the right direction for such schemes.

Councillor Wickerson asked Councillor Sherwood a question about the climate change situation. He had also received a copy of the draft Carbon Audit report which he felt was very detailed and he understood that it would take time to get through it all. However, at a previous meeting Members had been advised that the Climate Change Officer had been appointed and that in due course Members would receive some details about that individual such as an introductory email from that person which no-one had received. He asked Councillor Sherwood for reassurance that this information would be forthcoming.

Members were assured that the said information would be forthcoming but, at the moment, he felt that it would be unfair on the applicant in his first few weeks to have an inbox full of questions before becoming familiar with Breckland as a whole. That said, his first few weeks had been spent getting to know exactly what the Council expected of him and a number of conversations had been had and very shortly all information would be released accordingly.

9/21 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.

9 .a Cabinet Minutes (for information only)

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4 January 2021 were noted.

9 .b Overview and Scrutiny Commission (for information only)

The Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission held on 3 December 2020 were noted.

9 .c Governance & Audit Committee (for information only)

The Minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee meeting held on 17 December 2020 were noted.

The recommendations under Minute Nos 53/20 and 55/20 were dealt with under agenda items 9 and 10.

9 .d Planning Committee (for information only)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020 were noted.

10/21 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2019-20 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

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

The two reports had been discussed at the Governance & Audit Committee meeting on 17 December 2020 where both reports at agenda item 9 and 10 had been debated fully. Many questions had been asked and were answered accordingly as could be seen from the Minutes.

The Governance & Audit Committee had recommended various recommendations to Council for adoption.

One matter that had come across in both reports was the significant reduction both now and looking ahead on investment income which demonstrated that interest rates were likely to be held at 0.01% for some considerable time to come.

Alison Chubbock, the Chief Accountant and Deputy S151 Officer was asked to continue with presenting the report.

In summary the first report agenda item 9, it was noted that the Council had not breached any limits, there was no borrowing need and all requirements had been complied with.

For agenda item 10, the Policy and Strategy had not changed from the current year and was fit for purpose.

Accepting that the world was in a very difficult place at the moment, and on-going financial turmoil would surely follow, Councillor Birt had noticed that on page 66 of the agenda pack, revenue funding was going to be halved, however, this was prior to Covid and he asked if the Council had set itself up correctly in the first place.

Members were informed that revenue funding was not used very often and the

reason it had been halved was due to the Council committing some funding for broadband for approximately £1m. This was a one-off and hence the halving of the value.

Councillor Crane mentioned the 0.01% interest rates and was interested to know, as the Council had all these assets, what the average income interest rate the Council was receiving from these assets in comparison to what it would get in the bank.

Councillor Cowen stated that it would depend on the asset but as the Council held significant assets across the District and a strategy had been set for what income stream the Council might expect from each of those assets. He was aware that this ranged from between 3% and 5% up to 8% or 9% on the capital effectively that the Council had invested in the buildings. There was the potential to increase the Council's revenue stream by holding property assets even in these difficult times. Breckland Council would continue to invest in its District in order to grow and provide employment and see a way out of the pandemic through further growth and investment throughout the District.

Councillor Atterwill heard what had been said about investment in property portfolios but asked Councillor Cowen if he agreed that there was a certain amount of risk too.

Members were informed that any investment, whoever made it, carried a risk, but that was the reason why the Council had an analysis carried out by the Commercial Property Team and took out a full risk assessment prior to the investment. Most investments had been made pre-Covid therefore the events of the last 12 months were completely unforeseen.

Councillor Borrett, the Chairman of the Governance & Audit Committee pointed out that there was risk to any investment even putting money in the bank was a risk. There was also a huge risk to Breckland's services if it did not get the investment income that the Council used that was millions of pounds every year to support the services that Breckland offered. If it left all of its investments in the bank, the return of 10p in a £1000 would massively reduce the income that the Council had to fund those services. A balance of risk and reward would be one that he whole heartedly supported and believed that the risk profile of bricks and mortar assets that were based in Norfolk was something that the Council and all Members have had the opportunity to vote on many times and it had been the considered wish of the Council that it did hold a property portfolio that produced income and was used to pay for services for Breckland residents.

Councillor Cowen said that when he took on this Portfolio he knew very little about finance in local Government but it became very clear the support of the Councils services was entirely reliant on revenue stream and not capital and as a consequence, the Council's decision to invest its capital in bricks and mortar to a large extent had actually given the Council a revenue stream that enabled it to pay for its services to residents. Authorities were not allowed to use its capital to pay for waste collections services or any other services it provided and more recently, central Government in their latest settlement at the end of last year, had limited the ability for local government to borrow money to invest for growth.

With all this, the Council would be able to deliver a balanced budget in what had been a horrendous year.

After being proposed and seconded and subject to one abstention, it was:

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the actual 2019/20 prudential indicators within this report be approved; and
- 2) the Treasury Management Stewardship report for 2019/20 at Appendix B and Appendix C2) of the report be noted.

11/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY & STRATEGY 2021-22 (AGENDA ITEM 10)

This report was discussed under agenda item 9 (see Minute No. above).

After being duly proposed and seconded and subject to one abstention, it was:

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Treasury Management Strategy 2021-22 to 2023-24 at Appendix A of the report be approved;
- 2) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement contained within Appendix A of the report which sets out the Council's policy on MRP, be approved;
- 3) the Prudential & Local Indicators and limits contained within Appendix A of the report (Tables 1-11) be approved;
- 4) the Investment Strategy 2021-22 (Appendix B) and the detailed criteria included in Appendix B1 of the report be approved; and
- 5) the Treasury Management Policy at Appendix B2 of the report be approved.

12/21 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 11)

None.

13/21 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 12)

None.

14/21 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (AGENDA ITEM 13)

None.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN

Questions with Notice under Standing Order No. 6 – Full Council, 21 January 2021.**QUESTION 1:****Cllr Clarke to Executive Member for Planning, Cllr Claussen:**

I understand that there is to be a review into the operation of the “Chairman’s Panel” for Planning. At present there seems to be no role in this for the members of the Planning Committee itself, but a very small Group. To get the best outcome for this review, will the Executive Member please commit to an inclusive approach involving all the Planning Committee in the interests of both good decision making, using experience, and transparency?”

RESPONSE:

Thank you for the question.

The Chairman’s’ Panel was established in response to the PAS Review of the Planning Service carried out in 2018. It is led by the Chairman of Planning Committee and its members are made up of all members of the Planning Committee that choose to get involved. Those members sit on the Panel in rotation and whilst it is virtual all planning committee members are welcome to attend.

The Panel is a matter for the Chairman of Planning Committee given that it is a non-executive function. Periodically there will be a process that allows the Chairman to look at how it operates and incorporate any improvements that will enable it to be more effective. That process is generally ongoing and will generally involve the Chairman of Planning Committee, his deputy and officers of the Council.

The Panel was established to reduce the number of planning applications that did not need to go to Planning Committee taking up valuable committee time. It has been successful in that aim. It also allows Members that have called in planning applications to speak and make the case as to why an application should be heard by committee.

Members are always able to make suggestions, based on their experience of the Panel, as to any improvements that may be made in its operation and these will be properly considered.

QUESTION 2:**Cllr Morton to Executive Member for Health & Housing, Cllr Webb:**

Could the Executive Member for Housing confirm if there has been a response yet to the application for funding under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme and will there be a further application to the £300m funding being made available through Local Energy Hubs in 2021.

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your question.

It has been confirmed that no response has been received as yet. The Council will continue to review all funding options available to it in supporting its sustainability agenda. It will make applications where it can demonstrate that it has a scheme/project that would meet the criteria of the funding scheme, where this would deliver benefits to the district, and where delivery timescales, match funding or resource requirements to support the project considered would not make the application unviable.

QUESTION 3:**CLlr Morton to Executive Member for Customer Engagement & Member Champion for Breckland Sustainable Strategy:**

Can the Executive Member for Sustainability and Climate Change confirm an application will be made to the Workplace Charging Scheme to introduce EV charge points to our industrial units, as a way to encourage adoption of electric cars and improve the asset value.

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your question.

As previously highlighted at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in December 2020, part of the draft work programme being considered by the Council will be to look at a collective approach to electric vehicle charging points. It is important to consider the best and most appropriate locations for charging points to ensure their usage is maximised. As part of this approach, all funding options are being considered to enable the Council to get the maximum benefit from a capital investment that it might make.

Question 4:**CLlr Birt to Executive Member for Contracts & Assets, CLlr Hewett**

CLlr Hewett is quoted in the EDP as saying that the sale of the Green Britain Centre will "generate funding for reinvestment back into Swaffham".

- If the original investment was made with collective Breckland money, why should any future reinvestment only be made in Swaffham?
- Would such a policy limit achieving 'best value' for Breckland residents as a whole?
- Is justification and approval by a vote of Council required before such a policy is enacted?

Response:

Thank you for your questions.

A decision of Council is required to allocate reserves totalling over £100,000. Values less than this are delegated to Cabinet (£68,000 - £100,000) and officers (less than £68,000).

No decision has been made on the allocation of the capital receipt from the sale of the Green Britain Centre. Indeed, the Council is yet to receive the said receipt.

It should be noted that the Council has been successful in attracting a new business and employer to this site and the town at a challenging time.

The development of the Green Britain Centre and its use for over 20 years has provided Swaffham with a local attraction, which has supported the visitor and wider economy of Swaffham. With the unfortunate withdrawal of the tenant - using it for that purpose - those benefits have reduced for the town.

If Council deemed it appropriate to do so and balanced against other priorities, they could allocate some or part of the funding to be re-invested back into the Swaffham locality to offset the change in use at the Green Britain site.