
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

**Held on Monday, 13 March 2023 at 9.30 am in
The Breckland Conference Centre, Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,
Dereham, NR19 1EE**

PRESENT

Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen
(Chairman)
Cllr Paul Claussen (Vice-
Chairman)
Cllr Gordon Bambridge
Cllr Helen Crane

Cllr Paul Hewett
Cllr Jane James
Cllr Sarah Suggitt
Cllr Alison Webb

Also Present

Cllr Bill Borrett
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Cllr Linda Monument
Cllr Philip Morton
Cllr William Nunn

Cllr Paul Plummer
Cllr Taila Taylor
Cllr Lynda Turner
Cllr Peter Wilkinson

In Attendance

Sarah Barsby	- Assistant Director People and Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Claire Burton	- Organisational Development Performance Manager
Alison Chubbock	- Section 151 Officer & Assistant Director Finance
Andrew D'Arcy	- Planning Policy Manager
Stephen James	- Executive Director
Maxine O'Mahony	- Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service
Rob Walker	- Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Simon Wood	- Director of Planning & Building Control
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader

Action By

32/23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33/23 APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Councillor Cowen.

Action By

34/23 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

35/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

36/23 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed all Members present to the meeting.

37/23 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

38/23 BRECKLAND COMMUNITY FUNDING APPLICATIONS (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Alison Webb, Executive Member for Health and Communities was pleased to inform Members of the following funding applications which had been approved:

- Charlotte Harvey Trust - £4,900 to improve the toilets and create additional storage space at Watton Community Centre.
- Dereham Cancer Care - £4,652 to part fund the Manager's post from September 2023 to December 2023.
- Dereham Cricket Club - £3,850 to refurbish the shower area.
- Lopham Village Hall and Playing Field Management Committee - £5,000 to install solar panels on the village hall roof.
- Love Dereham Ltd - £2,105 towards a free monthly lunch in Dereham for people who are lonely, isolated or unable to afford a meal.
- Narborough Local History Society - £2,887 towards the purchase of a portable building to be placed next to the museum and used for research and study.
- Swaffham Swimming Pool - £5,000.
- Thetford Music Project - £3,600 to support the weekly fees for up to 20 young people who could not afford the cost.
- Thetford Vineyard Church (Growkids Project) - £4,500 to contribute to rental costs.
- Weeting Bowls Club - £5,000 to refurbish the kitchen.

In addition, a further 73 applications had been received for grants towards the Coronation Celebrations.

Councillor Hewett explained how Members had heard prior to the meeting how important the grants for community groups were. Even though they may be small in financial value, collectively it was important to support residents across the district.

39/23 BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN: FULL UPDATE: REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

Councillor Sarah Suggitt, Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning presented the report that reminded Members that in preparing for a

Action By

full update of the Local Plan the Council must consult with residents to seek their views on the proposed contents of the plan.

The Council continued to prepare up to date evidence that would inform important topic areas including Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, Gypsy & Traveller Needs Assessment and Integrated Assessment.

Councillor Hewett informed Members that he would not take part in the discussion or voting of this item due to an interest in the process.

Councillor Crane was really pleased to see sustainability had been taken into consideration within the plan. Councillor Claussen encouraged people to get involved and have their say.

Options:

Alternative options to the recommendation are -

- 1) An option would be to require Cabinet approval for engagement on each of the evidence and background papers as they emerged. This would delay consultation and could result in delays to the timetable for the preparation of the Plan.
- 2) The other option would be to undertake consultation without the formal decision to delegate authority or separate approvals referred to in paragraph 2.1 of the report.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

It would be important to undertake seamless community engagement as additional evidence emerges and options were refined. It was intended that it would take place in conjunction with the expert community engagement consultants to be engaged by the Council.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Planning to undertake additional community engagement under Regulation 18 as new evidence and information became available prior to the Council's consideration of the Regulation 18 Draft Plan.

40/23 NORFOLK PLANNING IN HEALTH PROTOCOL

Councillor Sarah Suggitt, Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning presented the report that sought approval for the Planning in Health Protocol to be used in planning decisions and spatial planning.

The protocol consisted of a multi-agency owned document between Norfolk planning authorities and health organisations. Members of the Norfolk Planning Policy Framework had agreed to endorse the revised Planning in Health Protocol at the January 2023 meeting and for it to be ratified by each local authority.

Councillor Morton asked if the Protocol would add weight to the Local Plan. Simon Wood, Director of Planning and Building Control said that the Health Protocol brought together a series of issues for planning applications and agreed that it would help add weight to the Local Plan.

Action By

Councillor Kiddle-Morris said it was a fantastic piece of work but felt that community safety should also be considered during the planning process.

Councillor Claussen passed on his thanks to Councillor Borrett who had been instrumental in bringing Health and Planning together.

Councillor Borrett said that Breckland Council had been an exemplar and was pleased to see the positive work that had been done. He also thanked Councillor Webb who had been an integral part in supporting the process in considering the Health and Wellbeing of the residents in Breckland.

Options

- 1) To Endorse the Health Protocol
- 2) Not to endorse the Health Protocol. This is rejected as it is important to develop and maintain strong working relationships with key statutory agencies.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Protocol would improve engagement with statutory health providers covering Breckland both when considering planning applications and the Local Plan Update as it emerges.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The approach to embedding health and wellbeing in spatial planning be approved.
- 2) The revised Planning in Health Protocol be approved.

41/23 NORFOLK ENVIRONMENTAL CREDITS JOINT VENTURE

Councillor Sarah Suggitt, Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning presented the report that asked Members to agree that Breckland Council joined with other District Councils in Norfolk alongside Anglian Water in the Norfolk Environment Credits Joint Venture.

In March 2022 Natural England issued new guidance that informed local planning authorities to consider the impact of nutrient enrichment before planning permission could be granted. This had resulted in approximately 1000 planning applications within the district to be put temporarily on hold.

Breckland had worked with neighbouring Norfolk Authorities and had established the Norfolk Environmental Credits Joint Venture between Norfolk District Authorities and Anglian Water. The purpose of the Joint Venture would enable developers to purchase environmental credits and secure mitigation.

Councillor Wilkinson asked if the Authority would be able to make its own decisions or if Natural England would be required to authorise the planning permission. Simon Wood, Director for Planning and Building Control explained that the environmental credits would be granted on each application in close liaison with Natural England.

Councillor Morton asked if the scheme was well funded and if there were

Action By

sufficient regulations to curtail any risk. Simon Wood explained that funding would also be available from other Districts and Anglian Water to help kickstart the process.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris applauded the initiative and asked if the sum of £30,000 would be dependent on the other Local Authorities agreeing to the Joint Venture. Councillor Suggitt explained that the funding would be from reserves and that enabling the initiative would allow planning income from the developments.

Councillor Claussen asked if there were measures in place to benefit the Breckland area by supporting smaller developers. Simon Wood explained that those considering the mitigation were keen to support the small / medium house builders. He added that as soon as a timeframe had been agreed Members would be informed.

Options

Alternative options to the recommendation are:

Option 1 - To require Natural England to produce the whole nutrient neutrality solution for Norfolk. Natural England has indicated that they will focus on the nature and land-based solutions. This option is not recommended as a way forward.

Option 2 - To pass responsibility to some other third party or investment vehicle to run a credit-based scheme for developers to access. This is not, by itself, recommended as a way forward.

Option 3 - Do nothing. Allowing the market to develop credits themselves alongside the Natural England nature and land-based offer. Developers can trade between themselves and develop their own mitigation plans. This is not recommended as a way forward.

Reason for Recommendation(s)

To provide the Council with a vehicle to deliver nutrient neutrality credits alongside other options to deliver housing development in line with national and local planning guidance.

RESOLVED that:

1. Breckland Council agreed to enter into a Joint Venture (a company limited by guarantee) with Anglian Water and one or more local authorities in Norfolk for the provision of environmental credits (initially focussing on addressing nutrient neutrality) in accordance with the attached draft heads of terms.
2. £30,000 revenue be committed in 2023/24 as part of establishing the Joint Venture. The purpose of the funding would be to establish the operating model in year one, after which there would be full recovery of the operating costs as part of the credit income.
3. the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Planning be delegated authority to finalise the details of the joint venture agreement and operating arrangements and enter into the Joint Venture.

Action By

42/23 2022 RESIDENT SURVEY

Councillor Jane James, Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services shared the findings of the 2022 Resident Survey and progress against the resulting Action Plan with Members.

The results were very positive and the information was now being used to build on the connectivity and trust to deliver further interventions with the residents.

Councillor Hewett said the survey was a timely reminder that Breckland Council was a great Council and had out-performed its own standards since the last survey. However, it was important to remember that the Council could still do better.

Councillor Morton felt that the Council should look to improve on the climate change figures and asked for further clarification on where the Breckland Bridge development included environmental matters.

Councillor Borrett was pleased to see the positive results but that there was no place for complacency.

In response to Councillor Morton, Councillor Hewett said that whilst the Council could not dictate to Breckland Bridge as it was a joint venture, it was an exemplar in reflecting what a good environmental build would look like to ensure that the environmental measures were met.

Members noted the contents of the report.

43/23 NORFOLK DEVOLUTION DEAL

The Chairman explained to Members that Norfolk had been invited into a Phase 1 Norfolk Devolution Deal which was also known as County Deals. Norfolk County Council was progressing with a consultation, and although Breckland Council was not included as a statutory consultee, it would respond to the consultation.

The report asked Members to agree the Council's official response to the Norfolk County Deal consultation.

Councillor Hewett felt that the residents of Norfolk deserved a better deal with local knowledge at the forefront and a proper consultation exercise should be carried out. He said the response had articulated the view as best as it could and called upon Norfolk County Council to take note of the response.

Councillor Morton added that the questionnaire had been badly worded and felt that the deal would centralise power, rather than devolve more power to the residents.

Councillor Wilkinson was pleased that a response would be provided on behalf of the District Council and hoped that an acceptable deal could be delivered for Norfolk.

Councillor Claussen urged residents to read the information available and to

Action By

provide comment as part of the consultation.

Options

- 1) To approve Breckland Council's draft response to the County Deal for Norfolk consultation
- 2) Do nothing.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Breckland Council were in firm support of devolution, and the role that it could play in levelling up the district, and Norfolk as a whole. However, it was the belief that the proposed County Deal for Norfolk missed an opportunity, and there were elements of it that were not ambitious enough. By submitting a formal consultation response making this case, it was hoped that this may result in a rethink by the County Council and Government around certain elements of the Deal.

RESOLVED that the Council's response to the County Deal for Norfolk consultation be agreed, and delegate to the Chief Executive the submission of the finalised response in consultation with the Leader.

44/23 DELIVERY OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES

Councillor Sarah Suggitt, Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning presented the report that asked Members to consider the future delivery model for the Planning and Building Control Services at the culmination of the contract with Capita in June 2024.

Having considered all options available it had been decided that the contract with Capita would come to a natural end in June 2024 and the planning services would be brought back in-house. There would be no material change until June 2024, but it would allow the long TUPE process for the staff to be transferred over to Breckland Council.

Councillor Hewett said that the planning team had been exceptional and hoped the change to the process and through support provided would encourage the planning team to continue to deliver a planning service that met the needs of the residents.

Councillor Webb recognised the importance of change and how it could be unsettling to the staff. She was pleased to hear that communication with the staff was ongoing and had confidence that the change would be handled positively and sensitively for the staff and residents.

Options

At the expiry of the initial contract with Capita for Planning & Building Control Services in June 2024 there were a number of options available to the Council, namely: -

1. To extend the contract for a 5-year period.
2. To tender for a new supplier and retain the outsourced model.
3. To share services with another local authority.
4. To let the contract expire and bring the services back in house.

An Options analysis had been included within the report.

Action By

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The return of services to the Council at the end of the contract with Capita would provide the Council with an annual revenue saving of £200,000.

The return of services to the Council at the end of the contract with Capita would provide the Council with the greatest opportunity and flexibility with regard to future service design and delivery models.

The contract is coming to an end and whilst Breckland has benefited from the arrangement over the last 14 years, now was the appropriate time to bring the services in house and ensure that they are ready to best meet the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

RESOLVED that CABINET RECOMMENDS to FULL COUNCIL that: -

1. Upon expiry of the initial contract with Capita for Planning & Building Control Services in June 2024, that these services should return to the Council.
2. The Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning, is given delegated authority to take the necessary action to formalise the end of contractual arrangements with Capita for Planning & Building Control Services.
3. The Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning, is given delegated authority to take any necessary actions for the return of Planning and Building Control Service to the Council and associated changes in budget and establishment.

45/23 REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

- (a) **Recommendations on Fuel Poverty and Credit Unions from Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

Steve James, Executive Director explained that two motions relating to Fuel Poverty and Credit Unions had been forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for consideration.

The report highlighted the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that had been allocated to individuals or committees for further consideration. This would also be in addition to the already ongoing support provided to those in hardship and poverty.

Members noted the contents of the report.

46/23 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 30th May 2023 at 9.30am in the Anglia Room, the Conference Suite of Elizabeth House, Dereham were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.03 am

CHAIRMAN