
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

**Held on Monday, 11 September 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 Sarah Suggitt (Vice-
Chairman)
Cllr Tristan Ashby
Cllr Paul Claussen

Cllr Helen Crane
Cllr Paul Hewett
Cllr Alison Webb

Also Present

Cllr Gordon Bambridge
Cllr Harry Clarke
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Cllr Robert Kybird

Cllr Paul Plummer
Cllr Mitchell Thurbon
Cllr Peter Wilkinson

In Attendance

Maxine O'Mahony
Rob Walker
Ralph Burton
Claire Burton

Jason Cole
Andrew D'Arcy
Andrew Holdsworth
Stephen James
Ryan Pack
Rory Ringer

Mark Snowdon
Simon Stubbs
Simon Wood
Teresa Smith

- Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service
- Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer
- Assistant Director Property and Infrastructure
- Organisational Development Performance
Manager
- Executive Director
- Planning Policy Manager
- Assistant Director Economy and Growth
- Executive Director
- Innovation and Change Business Partner
- Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring
Officer)
- Project Manager- Delivery Unit
- ICT Technology Manager
- Director of Planning & Building Control
- Democratic Services Team Leader

Action By

78/23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Action By

79/23 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Bowes and Councillor Cowen.

80/23 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

81/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

82/23 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed all non-Members to the meeting.

83/23 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

84/23 BRECKLAND COMMUNITY FUNDING APPLICATIONS (STANDING ITEM)

Nothing to report.

85/23 Q1 FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND PROJECTS REPORT

Councillor Alison Webb, Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services presented the report that provided information on the forecast full year financial position of the Council as at 30 June 2023 and an overview of the Council's Performance and Corporate Projects for the period 1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023 (Q1).

As part of the combined report, it highlighted some performance areas which were key to improvement over the coming months. It was mentioned that whilst there had been a fall in the Freedom of Information response times there were still nine out of 93 requests that received a late response. Work was underway to understand and resolve the root cause of the delays.

Councillor Clarke had noted the financial pressure on revenue and services and the reference to savings and asked how savings would be achieved when there was still a need to protect vulnerable residents. He also asked if there had been any further data regarding the Disabled Facilities Grant and asked when it was anticipated that new measures would be provided.

The Chairman said that over £1m had been invested to support vulnerable residents which was ongoing. The wider challenge was around temporary accommodation, however the Council had made a decision to become a stockholding Authority which was a step closer to attempt to deal with the issues faced as a district. Members heard that Councillor Bowes continued to work with Norfolk County Council colleagues and lobby government to change the formative position.

Councillor Kybird asked if the Freedom of Information request figures represented a large number of requests or was it the complexity involved in the responses and asked if the service was adequately resourced.

Action By

Councillor Clarke asked if confirmation could be given of when the feasibility study for the Car Park Strategy would be available.

Councillor Hewett confirmed that the information on the Car Park Strategy would be released and shared later in the year with all stakeholders. He also explained that out of the nine Freedom of Information requests, a number related to housing which required detailed investigation to fully respond to.

Reasons for Recommendations

The revised suite of indicators allows for performance reporting in line with the corporate plan in terms of organisational goals and aims.

Options

- 1) To note the content of the report and appendices showing detail of Finance, Performance and Corporate Projects and agree the adoption of the revised key performance indicators listed in Appendix D of the report.
- 2) Do nothing.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report and appendices be noted,
- 2) the revised performance indicators in the report for use in 2023/24 be adopted.

86/23 PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK REVIEW

Councillor Alison Webb, Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services presented the report that asked Members to agree and adopt a new framework for Performance Management.

Councillor Hewett said that it was an impressive step in demonstrating agile and responsive Council, whose responsibility was to ensure that the residents and businesses thrived and commended the report.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Webb, and the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny for their input into the review of the Performance Framework. He went on to ask if reference to the National Framework, OFLOG (Office for Local Government) should be included within the statutory return section of the document. It was confirmed this should be included and an alteration would be made before it was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Options

- 1) To agree to the adoption of the revised performance framework.
- 2) Do nothing.

Reasons for Recommendation

The council requires a framework which describes its current performance management approach. By having this, the council would be able to take a more unified approach to performance management.

Action By

RESOLVED that the revised Performance Framework be agreed and adopted.

87/23 ICT & DIGITAL STRATEGY 23-26

Councillor Alison Webb, Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services presented the report that asked for Members approval to implement an updated IT and Digital Strategy for 2023 to 2026.

Councillor Crane asked what environmental implications the strategy would have. Members heard that sustainability was a very important subject and were re-assured that the Council were moving to cloud base services which helped to conserve energy and also looked to re-purpose outdated and unused technology.

Councillor Kybird was interested to hear if any advice had been given from central Government on how Local Government should use Artificial Intelligence (AI). Members were informed that the Council did take a lead from central Government where applicable on the use of AI and a specialized conference was being held later in the year where it was expected that more guidance would be provided.

Councillor Clarke asked how digital inclusion would be rolled out. Members heard that although digital inclusion had improved over recent years it was acknowledged that some residents did not want to use technology and support would be provided in those circumstances. A strategy was being formulated with key partners and would be shared with colleagues across the district once it was ready.

Councillor Ashby asked how the strategy would ensure the Council were prepared for inevitable changes in technologies. The Executive Member for Customer and Corporate Services said that scalable solutions were being sought and actively involved in looking into collaborations to ensure the organization keeps abreast of latest innovations.

Councillor Wilkinson asked what Broadband support would be given to some rural villages who still could not receive adequate broadband connections. The Chairman confirmed that whilst the Better Broadband for Norfolk programme was still running, the invested capital provided by Breckland into the project had been spent. It was hoped that an update could be brought to Members in the near future.

Options

- 1) Approve and implement the updated IT & Digital Strategy 2023-26.
- 2) Do not approve or implement the updated IT & Digital Strategy 2023-26 and consider alternative content.

Reasons for Recommendation:

A strategy is needed to help ensure that there is a clear vision that can be applied to ensure the Council remains at the forefront of digital and technology advancements and that these can be applied to the delivery of Council services.

The strategy aligns with the Corporate Plan and the activities of the IT &

Action By

Digital service.

The existing strategy is now outdated and no longer fit for purpose.

RESOLVED that the IT & Digital Strategy for 2023-26 be approved and implemented.

88/23 THE BRECKS STONE CURLEW BUFFER AND SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)

Councillor Sarah Suggitt, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Strategic and Operational Planning presented the report that advised Members on new advice from Natural England with regards to the criteria used in decision making around development proposals within the Brecks Special Protection Area (SPA) zone.

Councillor Clarke asked if there would be a briefing for those members on Planning Committee. It was confirmed that Members would be briefed on the latest advice.

Councillor Kybird asked if Natural England relied upon unpublished evidence which was not in the public arena. The Director for Planning and Building Control confirmed that all evidence was within the public domain.

Councillor Claussen added that Shadwell Estate claim their farming methods of moving the curlews around the estate has worked and questioned if Natural England were aware of this approach. The Director for Planning and Building Control said he could not confirm if it had been included or not but has always advised Shadwell to speak with Natural England.

Options

This was a Statutory Requirement and not applying the latest advice from Natural England when decision making leaves the Council open to potential legal challenge.

Reasons for Recommendation

This was a Statutory Requirement and would help provide robust decision making on relevant planning applications.

RESOLVED that the new advice be noted as a material consideration for the purposes of determining planning applications within the Brecks Special Protection Area (SPA) and buffer areas and as evidence for work on the local plan update.

89/23 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 16 October 2023 at 9.30am in the Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham, NR19 1EE were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.10 am

CHAIRMAN