

Thank you Mr Chairman, and I can indeed confirm that it is my decision to stand down as Leader of this Council, for personal and private reasons.

My time as deputy leader and leader of Breckland Council have been enjoyable, challenging, rewarding and frustrating in equal measures. However I will take away some lasting memories both of places I have been to and people that I have had the pleasure of working with.

I want to thank all of the elected members who have supported and worked with me, I want to thank the cabinet members who I have worked with especially those that were involved with the Local Asset Backed Vehicle Process, which has resulted in the successful setting up of Breckland Bridge, as evidenced by the current Riverside development. Perhaps in a break with tradition I want to mention members of the opposition parties, I have enjoyed the debates that we have had in this council chamber, YOU have always been courteous and respectful to both myself and members of my cabinet, for which I thank you.

I believe that this council is now in a very strong position, we have a balanced budget, we are working towards removing our reliance on RSG, we now have an up to date corporate plan that reflects member's aspirations for the district that they serve, we are building both commercial property and also homes for our residents, we are building better relationships with our parishes and we have an emerging local plan that will ensure that we have a 5 year land supply, that could go a long way towards reducing the number of speculative planning applications we receive.

But none of this has happened without a great deal of work; that is a great deal of team work between Breckland members, Breckland's officers, and our partners. Breckland has what I would maintain is now the best group of officers of any council. I have had the honour of working closely with many officers at all levels of the council and I never fail to be impressed by their professionalism, integrity and desire to do the very best that they can, often under very trying circumstances. I want to particularly mention the Chief Executive and the 3 directors in all of whom I have the upmost confidence and respect and I want to thank them for the support that they have given to me. Truly I believe that the most valuable assets that Breckland has, are not the commercial buildings that we own, but the officers that work for the council and the members, across all parties who take an active, constructive and productive role in ensuring that they represent the residents that we all serve.

Thank you Mr Chairman, I look forward from this afternoon to getting my life back.