

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 6 July 2017 at 1.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Councillor E. Gould (Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr D. R. R. Oliver (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr R. F. W. Brame	Mr T. F. C. Monument
Mr D. M. Crawford	Mr M. J. Nairn
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr A.P. Joel	

Also Present

Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mr K. Martin
Mr J Newton	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr P.D. Claussen	

In Attendance

Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Alex Chrusciak	- Director of Planning and Building Control
Pete Fuller	- Locality Officer Engagement
Stephen James	- Communities Manager
Christine Marshall	- Executive Director Commercialisation (S151 Officer)
Phil Mileham	- Strategic Planning Manager
Tim Mills	- Executive Manager Growth
Sarah Robertson	- Senior Planning Policy Officer*
Riana Rudland	- Breckland Place Manager
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place

57/17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58/17 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Dimoglou. Councillor Wilkinson was present as his substitute.

59/17 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

60/17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 9 - Councillor Kybird Declared an Interest under TH23 in that he was involved in re-tendering for work on existing buildings in the urban extension.

Action By

Action By

61/17 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Councillors Bambridge, Claussen, Clarke, Newton, Martin, Robinson and Sharpe were in attendance.

62/17 UNSIGHTLY AND DERELICT SITES AND LAND

The Community and Environmental Services Manager outlined the report to Members, explaining the prioritisation process.

Councillor Jermy was encouraged by the piece of work that had been undertaken, and that if the issues were addressed it would make a difference across the district. He asked how the quick wins would be promoted and it was clarified that the Communications Team would be involved to promote the successes.

Councillor Joel was disappointed to see that Banham Poultry building was not included in the top 12. The Community and Environmental Services Manager said that although the site was not in the top 12, it did not mean this would not be dealt with. The performance framework would ensure the benefits of the initiative were realised and the list would be used as an action plan. It would capture progress and record outcomes of interventions that would allow for ongoing Member engagement throughout the process.

Councillor Wilkinson asked if the Town and Parish Councils had been consulted with. Members were informed that the consultation was with the Breckland ward members who were familiar with their local communities.

Councillor Brame highlighted that the Cottage Hospital Thetford had been categorised into the wrong ward. This would be amended.

Councillor Richmond asked how graded listed sites would be taken forward. The Community and Environmental Services Manager said colleagues would work closely with the planning department and the piece of work would formalise the approach to work closely with agencies and land owners.

Councillor Clarke said he had shared the initiative publically asking for residents to provide him with details. He felt it was a really good initiative to enhance the Towns.

The Executive Member for Finance asked how the initiative would be implemented if work had commenced on a site, but then had left it for a length of time. He asked if the Authority could impose new policies on developers to take action.

The Chairman suggested a function was added to the council's website to allow residents to report unsightly sites. The Executive Director of Place agreed to look into this.

Members **AGREED** to recommend the report to **CABINET** and the additional recommendations be added:

- 1) The ability to add the facility to report unsightly sites on the

website, under the 'report it' button.

- 2) That Cabinet asks Officers to explore what action can be taken on untidy sites where planning permission has been granted but the development has not yet been completed.

63/17 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members received a presentation by the Executive Director of Commercialisation on the Council's Treasury Management strategy.

Councillor Richmond asked that following the successful commercial property portfolio if the Council would consider purchasing a land estate that would provide tremendous growth over future years. The Executive Director of Commercialisation said that reserves would need to be used to provide this solution and there was a distinction between temporary and permanent use of cash.

Councillor Oliver asked if it would be possible for the local authority to borrow money from public loan board to purchase an asset. The Executive Director of Commercialisation said in order to borrow it would need to be a specific project to invest in.

Councillor Oliver went onto ask if public money borrowings were always annuitizing. If there was a maturity mis-match would it be possible to borrow for a period of 25 years, or would it need to be borrowed for a specific project. The Executive Director of Commercialisation said that it was a requirement for annuitizing, and whilst maturity mis-matching could happen, based on previous modelling this would not be viable. The Commercial assets were performing well, however the housing yield was much lower.

The Executive Member for Growth asked if the authority could invest in commodities such as art giving a higher return. Whilst this could be an option the profit would only be realised once it had been sold.

The Executive Member for Finance explained that the Authority would need to determine what it was trying to achieve. The work underpinned many policy decisions it would need to take over the next few years, and it needed a clear understanding of how it all worked.

Councillor Oliver presumed that when money was borrowed from the public loan body it was on a fixed term basis. If this was the case, then he would be interested in seeing more detail on share modelling as there were some portfolios that would see a yield of between 4 – 7%. He also added that the commercial portfolio had been successful due to decisions that had been taken a while ago. He would like to see that the council in 20 years time would be thankful of the decisions that would be made now.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for Commercialisation and asked that the Executive Member for Finance return to a future meeting of the Commission to explain this in further detail.

Action By

Action By

64/17 BUDGET TASK & FINISH GROUP IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES

The Executive Director for Commercialisation updated Members on the opportunities and ideas Members had raised as part of the Task and Finish Group, and that many of the suggestions had been incorporated into the process.

Councillor Oliver asked what level of debt would be sustainable for the business. It was confirmed it would depend on the asset to be required, and the impact it would have if it did not perform.

Councillor Jermy asked if the street lighting was subject to the 2% cap on the Council tax, as it was a risk element for the Council. The Executive Director for Commercialisation said this was a question being asked of the street lighting, commercial stock and the back-log of repairs and the cost to rectify this. Councillor Wilkinson added that within his ward a Parish had invested in LED lighting, which had helped to reduce the running costs.

Councillor Richmond questioned if the organisation was looking to deal with North Sea energy, or if there were any sites that could capitalise this. The Executive Director for Commercialisation said this would come under business rates into the authority who were actively acting as a partner for the companies who were thinking of undertaking as part of their business.

The Chairman asked for the Executive Member of Finance to report back to the Commission on the budget consultation.

65/17 BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION PUBLICATION DOCUMENT AND STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT- SEE SEPARATE SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA PACKS

The Executive Member for Growth presented the Strategic Market Housing Assessment first. The Senior Planning Policy Officer informed Members that the Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment formed the key element of the housing evidence which was required to support the Local Plan. The important element was the housing target to be delivered across the district equated to 612 dwellings per annum for the Local Plan during the period of 2011 – 2036.

Councillor Jermy was struck by the annual requirements for the number of affordable units had been set at 33% and asked how realistic this would be. The Senior Planning Policy Officer said the figure had been set across the whole of central Norfolk, and had not specifically been broken down for the Breckland area. However, it was expected that 25% would be the highest level that could be achieved across Breckland.

The Executive Member for Growth added that the Local Plan Working Group had examined the figure and were confident it could be achieved. The Director of Planning and Building Control confirmed that the evidence base had demonstrated 25% would be achievable. A viability assessment would be required by developers during the planning application to reflect this had been considered.

Action By

Councillor Jermy asked for assurances that 25% would be achieved. The Strategic Planning Manager added that there could be occasions when a development site would be below the target, but this would be shown through the viability assessment.

Members **AGREED** to recommend the Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment report to **CABINET**.

The Director of Planning and Building Control went onto present the Breckland Local Plan Pre-Submission report to Members explaining it had been shaped through a long process of public and stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering.

The primary aim of the Local Plan was to meet the need within Breckland for housing and associated employment and facilities. A key part of the Council's evidence base was the objectively assessed housing needs which had been provided by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The Local plan had been underpinned by a number of background reports and evidence. The key elements of those such as the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Duty to Co-operate statement were included as appendices to the report. The evidence would be submitted to the planning inspectorate at the same time as the local plan.

Members were informed that the Mattishall section of the Local Plan had been updated to remove site LP[061]019 and had been correctly changed. However it was still shown in Appendix H, and the error would be corrected before the plan was considered by Cabinet.

Councillor Clark congratulated the planning team on the large document. He went onto ask if developers were specifically aware of the green infrastructure within the District. The Executive Member for Growth said the 112 communities across the district had some elements of the green infrastructure and had been acknowledged within Dereham.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer added that Dereham had undertaken a Dereham Town wide study which had been included within the evidence base. The Director of Planning and Building Control said the policy related to the whole District and was aware that more places would have these studies.

Councillor Kybird noted that policy TH10 on Allotments had been replaced by ENV04, Open Space, Sport and Recreation, however this did not mention Allotments and this was something that had been lacking within the developments in Thetford.

The Director of Planning and Building Control said that the TH10 was a Thetford specific policy, but was still captured within the ENV04 as it was a public amenity space provided. He agreed to modify the wording to ensure it included allotments.

Councillor Brame asked who considered the design criteria and how much weight could the planning department, and the Planning Committee put on the design. The Director of Planning and Building Control said it was down to the applicant to assess the local area, and to have due regard for the design when submitting the plans.

Action By

Councillor T Monument highlighted that on Page 71 it referred to LP[025]023 Land off Shipdham Road, and this should be amended to Land off Swanton Road.

Councillor Duigan said Members should be wary of the design principles across the District, as a development within Thetford would look different within Dereham.

Councillor Richmond asked how he could motivate his parishes to accept development areas, especially with regard to allowing new builds within the village. The Director of Planning and Building Control would expect to see new development to meet the local need. He also added that the towns and villages had the option to put together a Neighbourhood Plan.

Members **AGREED** to recommend the Breckland Local Plan Pre-Submission publication document forward to **CABINET**.

66/17 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Brame informed Members that the Thetford Grammar school had been sold and that he was no longer a Member of the educational element, but may continue with the charity.

The Chairman asked for a representative from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to be on the Swaffham Air Quality action group. It was agreed that Councillor Peter Wilkinson would undertake this role.

67/17 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)

None.

68/17 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)

None.

69/17 WORK PROGRAMME

Members asked for the Executive Member for Finance to report back to the Commission and provide a briefing on his portfolio.

Councillor Jermy asked for the Commission to receive an update on Breckland Bridge.

Members also asked for a report on the Better Broadband for Norfolk to be added to the Work Programme.

70/17 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 14 September 2017 at 2.00pm were noted.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

CHAIRMAN