

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 27 September 2018 at 2.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Councillor E. Gould (Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr D. M. Crawford	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mrs T. Hewett	Mr M. J. Nairn
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr P. S. Wilkinson (Substitute Member)

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mrs J. Hollis	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr J. Newton	Mrs A. M. Webb
Mr J.W. Nunn	

In Attendance

Ross Bangs	- Corporate Improvement & Performance Manager (shared)
Jon Berry	- Head of Development Management
Alex Chrusciak	- Director of Planning and Building Control
Rosie Hill	- Customer Contact Centre Team Leader
Matthew Hogan	- Strategic Housing Manager
Stephen James	- Communities & Environmental Services Manager
Phil Mileham	- Strategic Planning Manager
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Andy Prior	- Digital & Customer Access Manager
Jason Tillyard	- IT Manager
Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place
Zoe Webster	- Customer Services Manager (INTERIM)
Helen McAleer	- PA to the Leader of the Council

94/18 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

(a) Minutes from the meeting held on 12 July 2018

Councillor Hewett did not think the Minutes accurately recorded what had been said and requested some amendments. Her request was not supported.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(b) Minutes from the special meeting held 17 August 2018

Councillor Hewett had requested some amendments to the wording of the ambitions in the ICT Strategy. Her request had not been recorded in the Minutes, but she noted that the Strategy had been amended.

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor Hewett's request for an amendment to

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the wording of the ICT Strategy, the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

95/18 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Brame, Dimoglou and Oliver. Councillor Wilkinson was present as Substitute for Councillor Dimoglou.

Councillor Kybird left the meeting between 2.30 and 3.00pm.
Councillor T Hewett left the meeting at 3.00pm.

96/18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

97/18 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

98/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

No declarations were made.

99/18 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Councillors Bambridge, Hollis, Newton, Nunn, Sharpe, Stasiak and Webb were in attendance.

100/18 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Councillor William Nunn, Leader of the Council, had been invited to provide an update the Commission. His presentation covered the following points:

- The strong financial management of the Council had put it in a positive position looking forward to the future. The withdrawal of RSG had been addressed and reliance on New Homes Bonus had been removed.
- Money has been realigned to create and support new initiatives such as the Market Towns Initiative, to establish the Communities Fund and to contribute further to our very successful commercial portfolio which financially supports Council services on an ongoing basis.
- We are now looking to create a new refreshed investment strategy. Businesses have changed and lots of allocated industrial land has been dormant for many years. We recognise this is a problem and we have secured HIF funding from the Government for Thetford and funding from the LEP to provide power in Snetterton to allow businesses to expand.
- The aim is to take our approach one step further by proactively engaging on our major sites and through direct intervention to generate interest in bringing longstanding sites forward. A proactive approach to problem solving for sites is what we are seeking to achieve through the council working with partners and interested parties to deliver housing and employment land in Breckland.
- We have 3 new teams (Contracts, Delivery Unit and Regeneration) all aimed at increasing growth. We are taking on seven apprentices and three graduates.
- The Local Plan

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- After five long years of hard work the Local Plan is moving towards adoption.
- We are just awaiting the Inspector's report following the Examination in Public process. More public consultation is likely to follow on any suggested amendments from that report. But we are still on course for adoption of the plan by March 2019. Post adoption, the Council will continue to keep the plan under regular review. We can be proud that we are ahead of all the other Norfolk Authorities in this process.
- Commercial Property Update
We are currently preparing a list of assets for disposal to ensure churn. We are constantly looking at revenue streams to secure the services we provide. There was a fine balance between acting commercially and being able to do the community things that we are pledged to do.
 - 'On the Road' Cabinets
These have been held in our market towns throughout 2018 and have been successful in improving public engagement. It is difficult for communities to engage when all the meetings are held in Dereham. There had been a good turnout of people and some good questions asked.
 - Health
We are active members of the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing drawing down £34,000 to be distributed as grants to community groups to improve local health issues.
 - Breckland Lottery
Our Breckland Lottery was launched this year is doing really well. Awe have sold about £50,000 worth of tickets providing money to 55 good causes across the District.
 - Corporate Plan Refresh
Work has started on the refresh of our Corporate Plan which has to be done annually. It will come through the Committee system in the next few months and will of course come to Scrutiny for consideration and to receive your feedback.
 - Community Reserve
This has proven to be a very popular scheme and several projects have already benefitted from grant funding. They include a £20,000 grant to KickStart to enable young people to get to work, and a £24,000 grant to fund expansion of the Dog Warden service. I'm pleased to announce that our Dog Warden service received a nationally recognised 'Gold Paw Prints' Award from the RSPCA again in 2018 for its stray dog service.
 - Music on the Green in Thetford
This Breckland funded project went very well and will roll forward to next year.

Questions were invited.

Councillor Joel asked what the Council was doing to prepare for Brexit and what issues it was expected to cause for the Council.

Councillor Nunn said that he was working with the LEP, the LGA and the County to understand the implications but they really needed to know the outcome first before any decision could be made on what to do. One thing was to lobby the Government to ensure receipt of European funding that was already pledged.

Councillor Jermy said that a lot of his casework concerned cutbacks to services from NCC, Flagship and the Health Service. He found it frustrating that these big organisations did not consult with the Districts. He asked what more could

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be done to bring those services together.

Councillor Nunn agreed that there were issues. A recent paper to the Norfolk Leaders Group had been about working better together. The Leaders had agreed to try to align services and teams to get better value for residents. This had been tried before without success but he was hoping that this time, with everyone suffering from lack of money, it had a better chance of working.

The Council was working with Flagship, but they were a stand-alone body and the only way to improve things was to build a better relationship with them. Issues should be raised through the housing team so that there was a proper record and then these matters could be discussed at the quarterly meetings he held with their management.

Councillor Kybird asked what advantages the District would get from Councillor Nunn's appointment to the LEP Board.

Councillor Nunn explained that he had been appointed to represent the whole of Norfolk's views. As a member of the Board he got to hear about upcoming topics and to know where the LEP would be allocating funding. He was then able to guide the officers in where to aim their priorities.

Councillor R Richmond asked if the Community Car Service was secure and it was a vital service for rural communities.

Councillor Nunn confirmed that he had no plans to reduce (or increase) the funding for that and he was aware of its benefits.

The Chairman asked if it would be possible to take the Cabinet meetings into the parishes rather than just to the Market Towns. She was concerned that the villages did not think the Council cared about them.

Councillor Nunn pointed out that there were over 110 parishes in Breckland and with only seven Cabinet meetings a year it would be very difficult to decide which villages to visit. He looked upon the market towns as hubs that served their wider rural communities. It was easier to hold the meetings there and he hoped that residents would take advantage of the opportunity to attend. He would however, consult with his Cabinet colleagues to seek their views.

Councillor Wilkinson asked if there was any chance of offering the apprentices a chance to stay on at the Council at the end of their term. He also asked if the Council was still funding the hospital to home scheme.

With regard to apprentices Councillor Nunn said that they could not be guaranteed a post at the end of their term but if they were good it would be great to keep them. He confirmed that he had no intention of stopping the hospital to home scheme as he was aware that the hospitals could not cope on their own.

Councillor Jermy asked if the Leader thought that District Councils would still exist in ten years, given the never ending reductions to funding.

Councillor Nunn was confident that they would still exist although there might be different models and more mergers. Economy of scale was the way forward.

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<p>Councillor Bambridge referred back to the Brexit question and said that he had attended a meeting in Norwich yesterday at which a delegation of Dutch traders had been visiting specifically to deal with Norfolk businesses, so it was not all doom and gloom.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Leader for his presentation.</p>	
<p>101/18 <u>CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 8)</u></p> <p>This report had been scrutinised previously by the Commission and had been altered at their request.</p> <p>Councillor Crawford considered it was a vast improvement, but he was still concerned about the 25% of Breckland residents who did not have the ability to go online. He was reassured that people would still be able to phone in for assistance.</p> <p>The concerns about vulnerable people were understood. Most services would still be available on the phone or face to face at libraries and in the main offices.</p> <p>Councillor T Hewett pointed out that the wording on page 36 of the Strategy should say that the Council would be providing 'excellent services' not good. The Executive Member for People and Information agreed to that change.</p> <p>It was also confirmed that the document would be proof read before it was published.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that subject to the minor amendment agreed above Members supported the adoption of the Customer Access Strategy.</p>	<p>SBarsby</p> <p>SBarsby</p>
<p>102/18 <u>ICT & DIGITAL STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 9)</u></p> <p>This report had also been previously scrutinised and had been amended to reflect the suggestions made at that time.</p> <p>The total cost of the digital work programme was £442,000 but it was too early to quantify the full efficiencies. Each project could be judged on its own merit.</p> <p>Greater emphasis had been placed on remote working to save time and travel.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> to support approval of the ICT and Digital Strategy.</p>	
<p>103/18 <u>REVISED GAMBLING ACT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (AGENDA ITEM 10)</u></p> <p>The revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles reflected changes in Government guidelines. A lot of the text was standardised, but it had been 'localised' where possible. It was currently out for consultation with stakeholders. The next step would be to produce a local plan for gambling, for businesses.</p> <p>Councillor Jermy asked if there was any guidance on restricting the number of betting shops that can open in one location. He knew of one street in Thetford that had three such shops. He was advised that that was not part of the policy as that was a planning issue which the Statement had no power to restrict.</p>	

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However, the location was taken into consideration before an application was granted.

It was clarified that betting shops were sui generis in Planning terms, meaning they did not fit into any of the Planning categories and therefore required express consent.

Councillor Bambridge encouraged all responsible citizens to lobby to encourage a change to prevent the increase in gambling.

The Licensing Manager pointed out that the Local Authority could regulate gambling premises but they had no control over on-line gambling. Public Health had approached the Council for information on the harm and the Licensing and Business Support Manager would be meeting with them to see what could be done.

Councillor Jermy noted that there was very little support for gambling addiction in Breckland and that was something the Council should be more aware of.

Councillor T Hewett suggested that engaging with schools might help to prevent future gambling problems.

RESOLVED to support the revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles.

104/18 Q1 2018-19 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The report outlined performance against the Corporate Plan. Most areas were positive. The following poor performances were noted:

- Gross rental income was under target due to rent loss caused by void premises.
- Staff turnover remained high. Comparison was needed with other authorities to determine if there was cause for concern.
- FOI responses had improved but were still well below target. Ways of automating the system were being looked at.

It was recommended that the performance of garden waste be measured by the number of subscribers rather than as currently, as that would give a clearer indication of uptake of the scheme.

Councillor Crawford asked if a figure could be provided for the number of empty properties in Breckland. It was also pointed out that there was no value against the indicator for Quarter 1. Ross Bangs agreed to publish those pieces of information.

RBangs

The Chairman asked for a report on FOIs for the December meeting, Information should include a breakdown of the categories of requests to indicate how many came from members of the public, MPs, businesses, etc and the cost of responding to them. It was noted that the Council could charge for the information if the request took over 18 hours to administer.

RBangs

Some Members were concerned about staff turnover numbers. It was suggested that a 'below the line' report should be provided to a future meeting giving more information about the reasons people were leaving. It was agreed that this would be added to the work programme.

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<p>The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A discount could be offered for having more than one garden waste bin• The bar chart scale on page 80 was wrong. <p>The report was otherwise noted.</p>	RBangs
<p><u>105/18 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 12)</u></p> <p>The Council was required to have this Policy and it was committed to providing fair and equal access to services etc. The Policy set out the Council's ambitions.</p> <p>Councillor Jermy asked if the Council carried out an equality impact assessment when it changed its policies as they were done at the County Council and they looked at all the issues.</p> <p>The Executive Director Strategy & Governance agreed to check if it was a legal requirement and whether such an assessment had been carried out.</p> <p>The report was otherwise noted.</p>	MOMahony
<p><u>106/18 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 13)</u></p> <p>The draft policy set out the Council's ambitions in line with the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>Councillor Kybird noted that three links needed to be added to the policy.</p> <p>The report was otherwise noted.</p>	SBarsby
<p><u>107/18 NORFOLK HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 14)</u></p> <p>The report set out the strategy for the whole of Norfolk. The County Council had responsibility for Health but the Council was taking a more active part in the three priorities of prevention, tackling inequalities and integrating ways of working.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councillor Kybird queried the figure spent on health and it was clarified that it should read £1.6 billion.• Gambling was part of the strategy which would bring a number of services together to deliver interventions.• The Health & Wellbeing Boards could lobby on the lack of respite care available in the District. <p>The report was otherwise noted.</p>	
<p><u>108/18 COMMUNITY ASSET VALUE POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 15)</u></p> <p>The Communities Manager gave a presentation to provide more detail about this Policy. He talked through the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities could identify buildings or land of importance.• Once land/property was listed if it came up for sale, communities had a fair	

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- chance to bid for it.
- The policy did not restrict who the asset could be sold to.
 - The policy did not give communities a 'right to buy' just a right to bid.
 - To qualify to be listed an asset had to continue to further the wellbeing or social interests of the community.
 - Once listed it will stay on the register for five years.
 - If a listed asset is put up for sale the community has six weeks to bid.
 - The asset cannot be sold during that six week period, but after that time the owner can sell to whoever they want at whatever price they want.
 - If a community bid was received during the six weeks, they then had six months to prepare a financial business case.
 - At the end of that period the owner can sell to whoever they want at whatever price they want.
 - The Council is liable for compensation if a landowner can evidence that they have incurred expense as a result of the asset being listed.

The process had been reviewed and there was potential for the Council to be more pro-active in advertising the policy to encourage communities to apply to list assets before they were actually put up for sale. It would not require a change to the policy. All Town and Parish Councils could be sent information about the scheme to generate nominations.

The Chairman proposed that a more pro-active approach be taken. Her proposal was seconded and approved.

RESOLVED that:

1. A more pro-active marketing approach be taken to inform Town and Parish Councils about the scheme in the first instance.
2. If Officers were able to cope with the increased demand, then other community based organisations should also be contacted.
3. An update report would be provided in six months, to show if the additional publicity had increased the number of nominations received.

SJames

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109/18 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS (AGENDA ITEM 16)

Councillor Jermy (Chairman of the Impact of Fly Tipping T&FG) gave a brief update.

A Waste Officer from the County Council had attended the last meeting and Members had learnt a lot. At the next meeting they would be looking at the impact of fly tipping on others.

110/18 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (AGENDA ITEM 17)

Councillor Wilkinson reported that NCC were working with Planning and local interested parties to produce an action plan to reduce the impact of air pollution in the centre of Swaffham. The plan would be presented to a future Council and then submitted to DEFRA.

Three actions from the plan had already been taken forward. Market Towns Initiative had committed £5,000 in match funding for initial appraisal work.

The Chairman was concerned about the slow progress. The Executive Director Place agreed to find out what the funding would be spent on and to provide that information to the Chairman.

RWalker

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Councillor Wilkinson also informed Members that the Breckland YAB now had five local youth groups and a new youth worker, working with the towns.

He also advised that the Norfolk Health Overview Scrutiny Committee had written to the relevant Minister raising the issue of vulnerable people having to move out of the County for mental health treatment.

111/18 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (AGENDA ITEM 18)

Nothing to report.

112/18 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 19)

Nothing to report.

113/18 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 20)

The Chairman requested the S106 item to be added to the work programme for the December meeting.

Also in December the Highways representative was to be invited back as no feedback had been received since their last presentation. Issues to be raised should be collated in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Jermy noted that there were moves to privatise the County Highways Department. He suggested a below the line item to consider the implications of that on Breckland. The Chairman asked Councillor Jermy to do some background work on the sort of questions that needed asking.

Items to be added to the work programme:

- Update on FOIs for the December meeting.
- Update on the Community Asset Value Policy to March 2019 meeting.

114/18 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 21)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 8 November 2018 at 2.00pm in the Anglia Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham were noted.

115/18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 22)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

116/18 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING - TRANSFER OF SERVICE (AGENDA ITEM 23)

The Local Authority had a duty to support neighbourhood planning. A post had been created and made permanent since 2016, to give communities a single point of contact.

There were a lot of synergies with that post and the work done by the Planning Policy team. It was therefore proposed to transfer the service to Capita. The

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move would provide increased resilience and knowledge transfer for the Council and would provide additional capacity for communities as well.

Financially it would be cost neutral. The existing budget would be transferred to Capita. It would require a change to the Capita contract.

The proposal did not affect the decision making pathways. The business case would be presented to Council, probably not before December of January.

It was confirmed that inter-department consultation would continue and the standard of service would remain as good.

RESOLVED to support the proposed transfer of the Council's Neighbourhood Planning service to Capita.

The meeting closed at 16:10pm

CHAIRMAN