

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 13 December 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 P. M. M. Dimoglou	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr D. M. Crawford	Mr M. J. Nairn
Mrs T. Hewett	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr P. S. Wilkinson (Substitute Member)
Mr A.P. Joel	

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr J. Newton
Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mrs A. M. Webb

In Attendance

Ross Bangs	- Corporate Improvement & Performance Manager (shared)
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Greg Pearson	- Senior Policy Advisor
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader

137/18 MINUTES

Safeguarding Policy (min Ref: 123/18)

Councillor Dimoglou asked if the term 'Honour Based Crime' was the best terminology to use. He thought it had been agreed by the Commission it would be looked at, however when the policy was presented to Cabinet it still made reference to the term.

The Executive Director for Governance confirmed that the Legal Services Manager had reviewed the terminology used at the request of the Commission however it was still relevant within organisations.

Councillor Nairn explained that the term had come about as a result of Police enquiries in that it was referring to a specific crime which was in accordance with their traditions but not in accordance with local law.

It was agreed that the term 'Honour Based Crime' would be kept under review.

Amendments to Breckland Housing Allocations (Min ref: 124/18)

Councillor Wilkinson clarified that his comment under this item was referring to a specific local lettings agreement he had under a S106 agreement, and was not across the board as implied.

The minutes, together with the exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 8 November 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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138/18 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brame and Oliver. Councillor Wilkinson was present as a substitute for Councillor Brame.

139/18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

140/18 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

141/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

142/18 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Councillors Bambridge, Clarke, Newton and Webb were present.

143/18 CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2023

The Senior Policy Advisor presented the draft thoughts of the Corporate Plan for the next four years (2019 – 2023) for Members of the Commission to suggest comments and amendments before the final draft version of the Corporate Plan would be presented to full Council in February 2019.

The Corporate Plan aimed to set the ambition of the Council under the following themes - Your Place; Your health and Wellbeing; Your Opportunity, and an internal priority of Our Council, with a number of critical activities that underpinned the themes.

Councillor Kybird asked the Military Covenant that the Council had recently signed up to be included in the Plan. He also highlighted there was no mention of Mental Health as a target area and the Council should consider how it would protect the vulnerable.

Councillor Jermy asked for clarification on the process of the plan and if there would be an opportunity to refresh bearing in mind the Local Elections in May 2019. He went onto ask that the critical activity referring to the Market Towns ensured Breckland created vibrant town centres with a strong retail offer. He also asked for the point on the Community Reserve to identify the benefit to the targeted need. He also asked that whilst Breckland worked to prevent homelessness it emphasised on how the Council effectively deals with homelessness. He also suggested that Council had been working hard to improve social mobility and therefore should be included within the Plan.

The Chairman confirmed there would be an opportunity to refresh the Corporate Plan on a yearly basis.

A number of points were raised against each critical activity for the Senior Policy Advisor to amend.

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The Chairman suggested the plan be considered by other areas for sense checking. The Senior Policy Advisor said that the plan would be checked with the Communications Team as well as some user testing to gain further input.

Councillor Wilkinson referred to the Norfolk Sustainable Transformation Programme would affect more than one District, not just Breckland.

Councillor Richmond asked if there were plans to plant wooded areas. The Executive Director for Governance said that whilst there were no plans community groups had access to the community grant scheme should they wish to do this.

144/18 DRAFT BUDGET, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2019-20

The Executive Member for Finance had given his apologies, however asked the Chairman of the Commission to present his points that were covered by the Chief Accountant's presentation. Members were asked to note that this was the final year of the Government's four year settlement that would therefore lead to unprecedented levels of change planned for 2020-21 going forward.

The Chief Accountant gave Members a detailed presentation of the draft budget to cover the salient points. The public budget consultation process had begun and would end on the 1 January 2019. The information for the provisional settlement had been announced that morning, and highlights for Breckland included:

- no change to the New Homes Bonus which meant that there would be an additional £70,000 into the Communities reserves for Breckland than previously outlined;
- Norfolk had been successful in its bid for the National Non-Domestic Rates pilot for 2019-2020, which would need to be built into the budgets;
- The referendum limits were unchanged for District Authorities.

The Budget had been based on a number of key assumptions including no reliance on the New Homes Bonus and the Revenue Support Grant. The budget assumed the Council Tax would rise the full amount of £4.95 per year. In 2020/21 there would be a fair funding review and the business rates changes which was unclear of the detail at this time.

The Chief Accountant gave detail on how Breckland had achieved good progress against its original target of saving £1.8m during 2018/19 through the Transformation Programme. It had already achieved £1.7m and through a review of projects the new projected saving would be £1.9m. A Member asked for details on the largest savings to date that had been delivered through the transformation programme. These would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

The income sources showed the largest income received was through the retained business rates (at £7.5m), the second largest was seen through statutory fees and charges (at £4.6m), and the third largest was the Council Tax raised (at £3.8m).

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Breckland had previously committed to invest £8.9m into the Growth & Investment reserve; and £1.5m into the Communities reserve for 2019-20. The Council currently had £0.6m available from renewable energy but were not relying on the value yet as further information would not be available until 2020 when Members would be asked to make further decisions.

In summary, Breckland had a balanced revenue budget through the medium term, and were in good financial position to react to any changes as a result of the Fair Funding review in 2020-21.

Councillor Dimoglou queried why the Growth & Investment fund had not increased, as he thought the Growth fund was set up to facilitate growth in the District. It was explained that the Growth & Investment fund had originally been funded by the Revenue Support Grant, but the Council would no longer receive this in future years.

145/18 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Corporate Improvement and Performance Manager informed Members how the team had historically looked at past trends and performance that had occurred over a period of time. It was hoped that the team could look forward and allow service areas to prepare for customer demand. For example the Council were aware when the Council Tax Bills were issued and therefore could be in a position to ensure enough staff were available to receive calls. Similarly the graphs would show when there would be a lull and could perhaps plan in training.

Councillor Joel asked how Officers would know to take the appropriate action. Members were informed that the team were moving to an account management approach who would work closely with the Service Manager to share information to help to maximise performance within their teams.

Councillor Dimoglou questioned if it was over analysis as he had always received a good service from the customer contact centre. He went onto suggest that the contact centre should consider opening hours to allow residents to contact the Council outside of the usual office opening hours. This suggestion would be considered as part of the customer service review.

Members went onto raise their concerns that residents were being directed to use the online services, rather than being able to telephone the Council and felt uncomfortable with that approach.

146/18 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Councillor Jermy informed Members that a Norfolk wide programme of action against fly-tipping would be rolled out by Norfolk County Council at the end of January 2019 and Breckland would be very much involved with this.

A report would be written to explain what the Task and Finish group had learnt and suggest recommendations. He was yet to be advised if it could be possible for the Commission to receive the report at the end of

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January due to the number of Officers and agencies that would input into the report.

147/18 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Wilkinson informed Members that the Norfolk Waveney and Mental Health Trust had been put into special measures once again. A draft strategy of improvement had been published and was available on their website and would be open for public scrutiny in February 2019.

The Youth Advisory Groups continued to grow and develop and had been given a variety of projects to achieve. The Swaffham group had taken part in remembering those that had fallen during the WW1. The Attleborough group had attended St Marys day Centre and had organised a raffle and two petting animals from PACT that had a positive affect within the centre. The Groups were beginning to engage with their Town Councils in how they could support the Youth in the future.

Councillor Bambridge had previously circulated drainage board details to Members.

Councillor Kybird informed Members that the new exhibition at Ancient House would be launched on the 15 December that aimed to raise awareness of the work of Olive Edis one of the most important photographers of the early 20th century and give her the recognition she deserved.

148/18 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)

None.

149/18 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)

Nothing to report.

150/18 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were informed that Capita would be asked to attend the meeting of the Commission on the 7 March 2019.

It was clarified that Members would like to see an overview of the process of the Section 106 monies and how it worked. Members raised concern as some had heard that Parishes were not seeing the results of what the S106 monies had been allocated to.

Councillor Jermy asked that the Member Induction update provided information on the roll-out of IT equipment to Members.

Members asked for the Chairman of the Environment, Development and Transport Committee from Norfolk County Council to attend the next meeting of the Commission to answer questions previously raised by Members regarding Highways issues across the District.

151/18 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting to be held on Thursday 31 January 2019 at 2.00pm in the Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham were noted.

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The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

CHAIRMAN