

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**Held on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 10.00 am in the  
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mr D. R. R. Oliver (Chairman)	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs L.S. Turner (Vice-Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr T. Birt	Mr I. Martin
Miss H. Bushell	Mr M. J. Nairn
Mr F. Eagle	Mr D. Wickerson
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mrs H Crane (Substitute Member)

**Also Present**

Mr R. Atterwill	Mr S.G. Bambridge
Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mrs A. M. Webb
Mr P. Morton	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr P.D. Claussen	Mrs S. E. Suggitt

**In Attendance**

Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Greg Pearson	- Senior Policy Advisor
Sarah Barsby	- Executive Manager for Information
Adele Newsome	- Customer Experience Manager Shared
Riana Rudland	- Breckland Place Manager
Ross Bangs	- Corporate Innovation & Performance Manager (shared)
Susie Richardson	- HR Manager
Neil Fordham	- Payroll and Reward Manager
Caroline Hannon	- Strategic Housing Manager
Lisa Oakley	- Senior Housing Strategy & Development Officer
Jane Booth	- Housing Options and Corporate Safeguarding Team Leader
Ruth Tudge	- Democratic Services Officer

**110/20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**111/20 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

An apology was received from Councillor Ed Colman. Councillor Helen Crane was in attendance as his substitute.

**112/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

None.

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**113/20 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**114/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

**115/20 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

Councillors Roger Atterwill, Paul Claussen, Gordon Bambridge, Harry Clarke, Philip Morton, Ian Sherwood, Sarah Suggitt, Alison Webb.

**116/20 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2020**

The Senior Policy Advisor, Greg Pearson, advised Members that the current Corporate Plan for Breckland had been adopted in February 2019 and was agreed to run to the period 2019-2023. In order to ensure that it remains current and continues to reflect decisions made by the Council throughout the year an annual refresh is required. The document at the meeting today represents the first annual refresh.

The Senior Policy Advisor explained how the refresh worked and highlighted that Appendix A was the plan as it was first agreed, Appendix B contained the proposed changes and amendments that Officers had worked with the Cabinet to identify. Appendix C set out proposed changes to the narrative and the explanation within each key corporate theme.

Councillors Martin, Kybird and Birt made a number of recommendations that they felt would improve the documents further. The Senior Policy Advisor said he would take on board the suggestions and review the document.

Councillor Atterwill suggested it may be more helpful for Members for two more columns to be included whilst trying to review the Plan, one for the Plan objective timelines and a further column to see what had been achieved in the previous 12 months. In addition that information should be readily available to the public to show transparency and accountability.

The Executive Director Strategy and Governance, Maxine O'Mahony explained that the information requested in the two columns was already included in a working document. The Corporate Plan was the higher level document and underneath that was the Delivery Plan which included more detail and sat across each different service area that did include the information suggested. This information was shared with the Cabinet on a regular basis. The Executive Director Strategy and Governance also explained that every year after the refresh the Corporate Improvement & Performance Team did a further piece of work to update residents on what work had been achieved against each of the areas so the information was readily available to the public

The Senior Policy Advisor also stated that the delivery of the Corporate Plan was also monitored on a quarterly basis through performance reporting to the Scrutiny Commission and in doing so was out into the

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public domain. The Chairman suggested Councillor Atterwill look at the Delivery Plan to see if it met the criteria he was looking for.

Councillor Atterwill also suggested that an additional point be added as many residents worked or had other commitments and for many reasons were not able to attend Council meetings but may have access to Livestream or could listen to recordings and so proposed the following be added:

CA44 to include under the column "We will..." 'Develop a clear strategy to improve open, transparent and accountable decision making by Live streaming Council meetings and publishing recordings of meetings' with the rationale 'To provide a more flexible and convenient way for the wider community to access the Council's decision making process and give the community increased confidence in the integrity and accountability of the decision makers and the Council.'

Councillor Jermy recommended this suggestion accepted and proposed as an addition to the Corporate Plan by the Scrutiny Commission, seconded by Councillor Wickerson. Councillor Birt agreed this would be useful to incorporate within the Corporate Plan as something we are aspiring to and that the document had to be about openness and transparency.

The Chairman felt that this could be debated as a potential recommendation from the Commission and stated he could not support the proposition at this time. He felt it was still a work in progress and he was not convinced that the live streaming and the costs involved to set this up at this stage would not be well balanced against the usage it could possibly receive at this time.

Councillor Ian Martin suggested that this should be passed to the Worksmart 2020 Group to look at and investigate possible costs under the delivery of the refurbishment of the Committee Suite. This was seconded by Councillor Turner. The Executive Director Strategy and Governance advised this was already being looked at within the Worksmart 2020 project.

The Chairman confirmed the proposal by Councillor Jermy, seconded by Councillor Wickerson to have CA44 inserted in the Corporate Plan and a proposed suggested amendment to the proposal by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Turner that it was to be sent to the Worksmart Group but containing the same wording as was first provided by Councillor Atterwill.

On the amendment to include CA44 in the Corporate Plan the Commission voted 8 in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention.

The substantive proposal which was that the wording proposed by Councillor Atterwill be added under CA44 'Develop a clear strategy to improve open, transparent and accountable decision making by Live streaming Council meetings and publishing recordings of meetings' be moved to the Worksmart Group which was agreed by Members of the Commission with 7 in favour, none against and 2 abstentions.

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Councillor Clarke suggested under CA18 that it should include all housing associations.

Councillor Martin made some further suggested amendments to a number of critical activities. The Senior Policy Advisor said he would take on board the suggestions and review the document.

**RESOLVED** that

1. the contents of the report and its appendix be noted and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission put forward a proposal they would like to see; and
2. the aforementioned proposals/amendments be incorporated in the Corporate Plan refresh.

**117/20 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY**

The Executive Member for Housing, Health & Environment, Alison Webb thanked the Housing Team for their hard work and commitment to developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Allocations Policy. The Strategy had been developed, in consultation with partners, following a review by the East of England Local Government Association who had introduced a new statutory requirement. The aim was to prevent homelessness, the need for emergency accommodation and associated costs.

The Place Manager, Riana Rudland, explained that a commitment had been made and an in depth review had taken place in consultation and engagement with partner organisations. There had been great interest received in working with Breckland Council and key agencies wanted to get more involved with Breckland's tenancy awareness courses to meet the needs of residents. The Place Manager would welcome the Commission's comments that could be incorporated in the final Strategy.

Trish Reed, Associate of the East of England Local Government Association gave a presentation on the Homelessness Review and Strategy explaining that they had looked at key issues and challenges and how to take a more pro-active approach to the prevention of homelessness and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.

The main priorities that came out of the review were:

- to improve access to early housing advice and homelessness prevention services.
- to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in Breckland.
- to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation and reduce reliance on B&B within 2 years.
- to develop new services and partnerships to improve housing options.

Members were pleased to see all the work being done on the new strategy and felt that the recognition of the housing issue was overdue. Members highlighted the percentage of homelessness of families with children and queried the suitability of properties with a need for temporary accommodation provision within proximity to current work

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and schools. The Housing Options and Corporate Safeguarding Team Leader, Jane Booth, had joined Breckland Council recently and was focussing on provision and family placement. She assured Members that they did look at family's education and work needs as a priority and aimed to keep families close to their support network wherever possible.

Members also voiced concerns over the monitoring of the application process to ensure it was not too long and no applicant slipped out of the process for any reason. The Housing Options and Corporate Safeguarding Team Leader assured Members that the process was monitored and was improving and statistics could be provided should Members wish to see any of this information.

Members suggested that the Housing and Planning departments should work together to try to ensure the needs of the housing department were met, particularly with the percentage of affordable housing being reduced from 40% to 20% as part of the Local Plan. It was felt that there needed to be clear communication between the two departments and that the policies needed to be in place in planning terms to try and get the delivery of smaller one and two bedroom houses. Members also felt the Local Plan Working Group should be involved to increase the provision of good quality employment opportunities.

It was also felt by Members that there was a lack of provision of overnight accommodation in the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE), particularly in the north of the district with homelessness people not having the means to get to accommodation provided in Thetford. Cabinet had agreed to provide funding of £1,000 in the short term but in the long term this would need to be reviewed. The Place Manager, Riana Rudland explained there was some funding available of approximately £8,000 within the current tranche of rough sleeper funding and under the next tranche of funding there was scope for a project to look at further emergency beds with wrap around support for individuals to help them move on. This funding included opportunities for premises which could be rented in advance, white goods and furniture.

The Strategic Housing Manager, Caroline Hannon, stated that the Housing Enabling Team was working with developers, registered providers and land owners to identify sites. She explained that this was previously a shared service between Breckland and Kings Lynn but was now a Breckland only service. They had strengthened the links between housing enabling and planning so that when planning applications came in for new schemes, the Housing Team would respond as part of the formal consultation process to ensure the Planning Officers maintained the provision of affordable housing as set out in the Local Plan.

Members also raised concerns in respect of private landlords giving a 6 month or 1 year contract, the Executive Member for Housing, Health & Environment said she would raise the issue of the contracts at the private Landlords Forum in March.

Members noted the report.

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**118/20 ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

The Executive Member for Housing, Health & Environment explained the Draft Allocations Policy was due to go before Cabinet in March. Members were asked for their comments. The aim of the report was to change the banding levels, reduce the need for temporary accommodation and to shorten the stay for people in temporary accommodation.

After a short discussion Members noted the report.

**119/20 QUARTER 3 2019-20 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT**

The Executive Member for Governance, Sarah Suggitt introduced the Quarter 3 Performance Report for Members to note. In summary the Council continued to perform strongly with 8 of the 14 Key Performance Indicators performing at or above target. There had been significant improvements in the indicators which measured the performance of the Environmental Services Team. The service reported that 40% of all household waste collected within this period was either recycled or composted against a national Local Authority average of 29%. Areas where performance required improvement was the Customer Contact Centre, of the 26,555 calls received within this period, 81.5% were successfully answered against a target of 90%. In addition the average wait time showed an area which needed improvement. As was reported last quarter a Deep Dive analysis of the service was underway, it was proposed that this exercise would be concluded with findings and recommendations for improvement at the end of March.

Councillor Birt had concerns in respect of the calculation of the average wait time. He felt that this still was not clear and the data needed to be accurate to enable accurate measuring of the performance indicator. The Executive Manager Information, Sarah Barsby, explained the way the time waiting was reported was by way of industry practice which enabled benchmarking against other organisations. The rationale behind this was that until the customer had heard the options available they had not yet made a decision as to whether to queue or use other methods available. Other ways of measuring could be looked at. The Chair asked Members to vote on whether further investigation should take place on calculating wait times, or to remain with the benchmark measuring. Only 2 Members voted for further investigation and it was agreed that the current benchmark calculation remain.

Councillor Martin expressed concerns in respect of the results of the Contact Centre and felt it was not improving as it should. He suggested waiting until the 'Deep Dive' had been completed and the results of the findings being made. This could then be reviewed at the next meeting as to whether any further measures should be taken to improve the service. In response the Executive Manager Information stated that there had been some improvements made this month which was a result of some changes already made. The new Customer Experience Manager, Adele Newsome, was introduced, who had spent a considerable amount of time with Contact Centre Team to understand the pressure points and what could be done to address performance.

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Councillor Birt mentioned confusion over the missed bin collection rate calculation. The Chairman explained how this was calculated.

Councillor Birt re-iterated that he had asked the Performance Team to investigate a 'histogram pictorial' to record Freedom of Information requests and complaints. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager advised that they were currently unable to articulate this as they did not have the correct software to be able to produce such information.

Councillor Jermy suggested, based on the previous report on Homelessness, that the Performance Report could include figures on the time to process housing applications which the monitoring of might provide useful data. The Corporate Improvement Performance Manager agreed and said that the data was held and could provide this if the Commission felt it was a useful tool. The Chairman asked Members to vote on this matter and it was not agreed to include any further information in the Performance Report; however, Members could request this information at any time from the Corporate Improvement Performance Manager.

The Commission noted the report.

**120/20 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21**

The Executive Director Strategy and Governance, Maxine O'Mahony, apologised and stated this was an error and should not have been on the agenda, it was a statement of fact, not for debate and would be included on the Cabinet agenda.

**121/20 OUTSIDE BODY FEEDBACK (STANDING ITEM)**

None.

**122/20 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)**

None.

**123/20 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)**

None.

**124/20 WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor Martin suggested that the Highways Agency be invited to a future meeting to explain the calculation of traffic movements and the advice they provide to Planning.

Councillor Martin also asked if a representative of Anglian Water could be invited as a statutory body to explain how it assessed individual applications and how they were dealt with. Councillor Webb said she would ask Anglian Water if they would come along to a future meeting.

Councillor Jermy suggested, given the size of the project, a review of the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension plan, now that the first residents had moved in, how it was going and if there had been any

strain on infrastructure.

It was agreed that the request for the Contact Centre be added to the Work Programme and reviewed following the 'Deep Dive' exercise.

**125/20 NEXT MEETING**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 19 March 2020 at 10:00am in the Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham were noted.

**126/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**127/20 WORKSMART 20:20 - TERMS & CONDITIONS**

Noted.

The meeting closed at 12.32 pm

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CHAIRMAN