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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

Held on Thursday, 24 September 2020 at 10.00 am

This meeting is in line with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels
(Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)
(England and Wales) Regulations 2020

PRESENT

Mrs L.S. Turner (Chairman)	Mr K.S. Gilbert
Mr R. F. W. Brame (Vice-Chairman)	Mr C. Harvey
Mr S Askew	Mr P.J. Hewett
Mr R. Atterwill	Mrs J. James
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr T. J. Jermy
Mr T. Birt	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr R.G. Kybird
Councillor C. Bowes	Mr I. Martin
Mr M. P. Brindle	Mr K. Martin
Miss H. Bushell	Mrs L.H. Monument
Mr T. R. Carter	Mr P. Morton
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mr J.W. Nunn
Mr S. H. Chapman-Allen	Mr D. R. R. Oliver
Mr E. Colman	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mrs S. E. Suggitt
Mrs H Crane	Miss T. Taylor
Mrs V. Dale	Mrs A. M. Webb
Mrs S. Dowling	Mr D. Wickerson
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr N.C. Wilkin
Mr F. Eagle	Mr P. S. Wilkinson

In Attendance

Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
John Mullen	- External Funding Officer
Riana Rudland	- Breckland Place Manager
Sarah Shipley	- Shared Public Protection Manager
Mark Stinson	- Executive Manager Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Julia Perry	- Change Manager and Organisational Development Officer
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

Announcement by the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman paid tribute to Anna Graves, following her resignation as Breckland Council's Chief Executive.

Action By

The Chairman had been privileged to be part of the Appointments Panel when Anna was interviewed and was offered the Chief Executive position for both Breckland and South Holland District Councils. In the few years that she had known and worked with Anna, she had proved to be a hardworking, feisty, innovative, and committed Chief Executive, determined to take both Councils forward in an exciting and pioneering manner. Anna had earned the respect and gratitude of members and staff alike and her presence would be sorely missed.

The Chairman understood Anna's decision to take another path in life, and to concentrate on her family and the community around her and the Chairman thanked her for her sterling commitment to the Council and the residents and wished her very best wishes in whatever she decided to do in the future.

Members were then reminded of the meeting protocol.

58/20 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashby, Claussen, Grey, Kiddell, Nairn and Terry.

59/20 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

60/20 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 5 (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Executive Manager for Governance advised that in order to keep the business on the agenda as manageable as possible the reporting of Committee Minutes had been removed. The Council was therefore asked to suspend Standing Order 5 of the Council's Constitution.

Following a show of hands, it was

RESOLVED that Standing Order No. 5 be suspended.

61/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None declared.

62/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Prior to any announcements being made by the Chairman, Riana Rudland, the Breckland Place Manager and Sarah Shipley, the Public Protection Manager, who had been leading on the Critical Services Cell since the start of the pandemic were in attendance, and provided Members with a detailed presentation.

The presentation highlighted the hard work and achievements made by all staff including Capita staff, ARP and Serco during and after the lockdown.

Council buildings had been made Covid compliant by the Facilities Team, protocols had been developed, and safe working procedures had been put in place by the Health & Safety Team.

The success stories were highlighted which included the significant part that Breckland Council had played in the management of the Banham Poultry outbreak

and the Covid testing sites that had been sourced.

(A copy of the presentation is attached to the Minutes for information).

Members were asked to direct any questions to the relevant officers after the meeting.

Following the presentation, the Chairman reminded Members that the UK was still in the middle of a pandemic and was entering another critical phase. Whilst all the Council's services were important, Officers were rightly prioritising Covid-19 and all the implications that came with it, and she asked Members to think before asking Officers for extra reports or information on other topics that could take them away from managing the current crisis as the safety and wellbeing of the communities was paramount.

63/20 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Leader made the following announcements:

Covid-19 – National Guidance

Following the recent changes to the national guidance announced by the Prime minister earlier in the week, Norfolk's overall rate remained lower than England's average; however, the Leader urged everyone to follow the new guidance as it was paramount not to become complacent. A new National Health Service App had just been launched and again he urged all Members to download it as this had been designed to help track and trace. Businesses were now required to display QR codes to allow customers to easily check in to ensure that the virus was able to be controlled.

Officers had been working with local businesses across the District to raise awareness of this new requirement and support them so that they could become compliant in respect of the new rules and regulations.

The Council would continue to deliver all essential services that had been highlighted in the earlier presentation in the same manner as it had throughout the pandemic. For now, the vast majority of staff would continue to work from home and would continue to serve customers remotely either on-line, on the phone or, and if absolutely necessary, face to face.

These had been extremely challenging times for everyone, not just in Breckland but across the country and of course, the world but he had been pleased by the way everyone in Breckland had risen to the challenge. Until life returned to some normality, it was uncertain what the forthcoming months might hold; however, Breckland Council's priorities would continue, supporting its businesses to thrive, to be safe and successful whilst also providing protection for its residents, and in particular, those who were most vulnerable.

Members were then reminded of the Banham Poultry outbreak.

Regular updates had been and would continue to be provided to all Members. Officers involved in handling the outbreak had worked with partners across Norfolk including Norfolk County Council's Public Health to ensure that the outbreak was successfully managed. To date, there had been 135 confirmed positive cases but thankfully, there had been no evidence of any further outbreaks within the community. He was pleased to inform Members that the peak of the outbreak had

now passed, and data had shown that levels had now returned to what they were prior to the outbreak. As a result, Norfolk was no longer on enhanced support, the factory had returned to full production with approximately 80% of staff now back on site. This was good news for all those people affected, for the company and for the community. The outbreak had been well managed but there were still improvements to be made to ensure that Breckland and Norfolk were safe and well prepared for any future outbreaks.

Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System

The Leader reminded Members of the discussions held in 2019 in respect of ANPR that was mainly used by the Police. Further progress had been made in respect of Breckland's commitment through its vulnerability programme. The Council had invested £60,000 to support the installation of cameras within the District in support of Norfolk Constabulary to deter, detect and disrupt criminal activity particularly around County Lines. The Police were now deciding where the best strategic locations were for these cameras - it would be inappropriate to confirm, for operational reasons, where these cameras would be situated. Going forward, he asked Members to be confident in the knowledge that the investment made by this Council would detect and deter criminal activity to keep Breckland's communities and its residents safe.

Daisy Programme

Another way that Breckland had been supporting its residents was the prevention of domestic abuse as part of the Council's £1m vulnerability programme Breckland Council funded the Daisy Programme to enable the establishment of Community Support Teams for residents within the District and increased access to information. Dereham Football Club was now sponsoring the Daisy Programme by having the logo displayed on their football shirts which would help to promote awareness of domestic violence.

Government White Paper and Changes to the current Planning System

The proposals contained in the recently released Government White Paper and the separately published document 'Changes to the current Planning System' had raised many questions from the community, and from this Council, and responses to those questions were continuing at pace.

Some of the proposals were valid and warranted change, but others, if implemented, would have an impact on Breckland and a very serious impact on the community. The imposition of a 75% increase to the annual build rate target from 612 to over 1000 dwellings per annum would be detrimental to the District as the lack of infrastructure to support this large increase would be near impossible to manage and would also be a blight on the communities.

The Executive Member for Planning had already sent a letter to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) asking for clarification in respect of what these proposals would mean to the Council's Local Plan; and had asked that the requirement under planning policy INF03 be suspended. Additionally, another letter of concern had been sent to MHCLG setting out Breckland Council's headline concerns about the increase in housing numbers, the lack of infrastructure, the lack of support for the Local Plan, as well as concerns about S106 agreements in respect of affordable homes and what that would mean for Breckland when there were developments of less than 50.

A Member Briefing had taken place earlier in September where an extensive discussion had been had between Planning Officers and Members and the Leader thanked those Members who had participated. Breckland Council would continue to work with partners such as the LGA District Council's Network, and others to ensure that the voice of the District Council was heard. This had been followed by the opportunity for Members to make their own submissions to the Planning Policy Team and he encouraged everyone, if they so wished, to make further comments as the timeline was limited and the consultation period would end soon. There was nothing to prevent individual Members or Parish Councils responding and some had already done so.

Chief Executive

As this was the last Full Council meeting that the Chief Executive would be attending, the proposals for Anna's successor were explained.

In the meantime, the interim arrangements that had already been put into place were working well and would help both Breckland and South Holland Councils to consider the best options going forward whilst taking into account the level of change that local government could see in the coming months, as well as the impact of Covid-19.

Battle of Britain tribute

Breckland Council had a long and proud tradition of supporting the armed forces communities, and the Leader took the opportunity to highlight the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The Battle of Britain took place between July and October 1940, and 15th September had been officially named Battle of Britain Day and, although in September 2020, the world had been and was continuing to face a very different kind of threat, Members were encouraged to remember those who lost their lives during this iconic battle.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for his announcements, particularly in respect of the Battle of Britain as she and the Vice-Chairman had attended many such virtual events.

Questions based on the Leaders announcements were then invited.

Councillor Ian Martin asked the Leader a question relating to the changes to the Planning System. He believed that the document recently circulated to Parish Councils and to Elected Members that set out Breckland Council's likely response had been very encouraging. It actively reflected the strength of feeling from the Members' Briefing, and it had certainly put the points across. He encouraged the Officers to continue their work with the support of the Executive Members.

The Leader concurred with Councillor Martin's comments. Breckland's response would be robust and it would continue to be transparent and further information would be shared with Members and the community accordingly.

Councillor Atterwill asked if a response had been received to the letters that had been sent to MHCLG and if those letters could be made available to all Members.

Councillor Atterwill also wanted his thanks to everyone involved in respect of Banham Poultry to be placed on record as he was aware that all had worked very

hard to try and avert this crisis and was pleased that 80% of the staff had returned to work. He was also aware that George Freeman MP had asked DEFRA if any financial support could be provided to Banham Poultry for what it had lost during the outbreak and asked if Breckland Council were doing the same, bearing in mind that Banham Poultry was classed as a vital employer in the District.

In respect of the letters being made available to Members, the Leader advised that he would be happy for the Executive Member for Planning to share those with all Members. MHCLG had not yet responded but any response would also be shared once received.

In response to the second question, the Leader advised that he had written to the Secretary of State in respect of Banham Poultry within a week of the incident, but the response was still awaited. Again, the response, once received, would be shared but with Attleborough Members first.

Councillor Jermy also asked a question in respect of Banham Poultry. He knew that self-isolation was absolutely key if a person was displaying symptoms but many who worked at the factory were on low incomes and there had been many concerns raised about statutory sick pay not being sufficient to support those affected. He had noted that with Banham Poultry specifically, the Norfolk Assistance Scheme had provided £32k in cash together with 237 food parcels worth £5k. This support had been absolutely key, and he asked if Breckland Council would be reviewing to what extent this assistance had supported self-isolation and making that knowledge known more widely to help prevent such incidents in the future.

Members were informed of the overarching tactical group that had responded to the Banham Poultry outbreak and how further lessons had been learnt. Breckland Council had already changed some of its processes and procedures, and services had improved in preparation for any future outbreaks. In relation to support for those individuals who had to self-isolate, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care had already announced a change to the self-isolation fund that would come into effect very soon and colleagues across Norfolk were working diligently to ensure that this system was in place and ready to go live on Monday, 28 September. As soon as further details were received, he would share this information with all Members and to Parish Councils alike.

Councillor Clarke's question related to Covid. He was aware that a great deal of work had been carried out behind the scenes and asked the Leader, for public assurance, if he would make sure that the full risk assessment relating to Elizabeth House in Dereham and Breckland House in Thetford was published on the Council's website.

The Leader said that he would have to get back to Councillor Clarke on this matter.

64/20 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

In line with the Constitution, the following questions and responses had been circulated to Members prior to the Full Council meeting as included below.

Also, in accordance with the Constitution, a number of supplementary questions were also asked.

For ease of reference, the supplementary questions have been included in italics below.

- **Question received from Councillor Roger Atterwill to the Executive Member of Planning**

Councillor Atterwill had recently been advised that the Council had ceased using the District Valuer to assess developer viability assessments and was instead using a private company called CP Viability Ltd. He asked if the reason(s) for this change could be confirmed:

- whether a competitive tender process had been followed
- who within the Council authorised this change; and
- how could local residents be assured that assessment advice received by CP Viability Ltd was impartial.

- **Response**

The decision to do this was taken because there had been concerns expressed by Members and officers about viability appraisals and it was considered that it was appropriate to go to the market and look to appoint a Valuer to advise the Council on such matters.

The contract was openly tendered in December 2019 and was uploaded to Contracts Finder. The contract commenced on 1st March 2020 and would run until 28th February 2023. There was an option to extend the contract.

The cost for carrying out viability appraisals was recharged to the developer/applicant so there was no direct cost to the Council.

It was considered that the traditional providers of viability appraisals had links to the development industry and their impartiality could not be assured. The decision had therefore been taken to appoint a consultant with no links to the development industry and would be more challenging to the appraisals provided. The company that had been appointed worked exclusively for the Public Sector and the tender had been designed so that only bids from companies that worked exclusively for the Public Sector would be accepted. This was considered to provide a greater assurance of impartiality and challenge to the development industry. This was a delegated decision.

- ***Supplementary Question:***

In terms of the Council not using the District Valuer anymore, Councillor Atterwill welcomed the appointment of a private company to undertake viability appraisals but asked that, in future, when any decisions such as these were made, that the Chairman of the Planning Committee be informed in the first instance rather than Members being informed of such changes by a third party.

- ***Response:***

In the absence of the Executive Member for Planning, the Leader said that this procedural matter would be investigated, and in future, any decisions that affected the planning process would be reported to the Chairman of the Planning Committee accordingly.

- **Question received from Councillor Roger Atterwill to the Executive**

Member of Planning:

At the Cabinet meeting held on 13th July 2020 the Executive Member for Planning had been asked if planning conditions placed on any permission decision notices were subsequently monitored by the Council to ensure compliance by the developers. A written response had been received on 12th August from the Executive Director for Place confirming that Planning Conditions were not monitored by the Council. Therefore, please could the Executive Member for Planning answer the following points:

- Some planning conditions could be very technical in nature. Does the Executive Member believe that it was acceptable to simply rely on the public to 'police' planning conditions bearing in mind that planning permissions affecting local communities were very often granted subject to multiple planning conditions being adhered to?
- The Council apparently had a system of monitoring in place for S106 agreements with staff resources allocated for this purpose. Would you agree to produce a feasibility paper for a similar system to be implemented for the monitoring of planning conditions and produce a recommendation for consideration by Cabinet?

• **Response:**

There was no statutory requirement for a Local Planning Authority to monitor planning conditions. The Authority was required to keep a copy of any S106 Agreement and make these publicly available on its planning register.

It was also required to publish an infrastructure funding statement at least annually. These requirements, together with the need to ensure S106 obligations were spent within a certain period or they were lost, makes it necessary to have a robust monitoring system for S106 obligations.

The onus was on developers to ensure they complied with conditions. Many conditions, especially those that were more technical in nature, were generally formally discharged through the Discharge of Conditions process.

The Council determined around 1700 applications within the last calendar year and the resources required to monitor all the conditions on these applications would be high. This would outstrip the resources currently utilised to enforce conditions when a breach of condition was identified. It should also be noted that where there was a breach of control, enforcement powers do exist to rectify these, there was also the ability for a developer to seek to modify conditions and the Local Authority would also have to take a view as to whether it was expedient to enforce against a breach of condition having regard to the nature of that breach and its impact.

The Director of Planning and Building Control had been asked to prepare a paper on the matter which could then be formally considered.

• **Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Atterwill had noted the response that planning conditions were not monitored by the Council but asked if there had been any breaches over the last five years and whether they had been recorded, challenged and enforced.

- **Response:**
The Leader asked Councillor Atterwill if he would put that question to him again in writing after the meeting so that an accurate response could be provided.

- **Question received from Councillor Roger Atterwill to the Executive Member of Governance:**

According to the Council's standard email disclaimer "Emails sent from and received by employees of Breckland Council may be monitored". Please could it be confirmed if the same email disclaimer applied to individual Councillor emails and if so, who the individuals were who were authorised to carry out this monitoring for the Council, and what specifically were they monitoring and who within the Council was authorised to have access to any subsequent data held?

- **Response:**

The Council's standard email disclaimer applied to Members and Officers alike. Monitoring of emails would only take place within the context of a specific investigation activity (e.g. in the event of disciplinary action, such as misuse of data and/or I.T equipment). Any investigation would only be conducted following suitable professional or management consideration (such as the HR Team), who would authorise one or more individual Officers to carry out the monitoring for a specific investigation. Only those individuals who were assigned to support a particular investigation would have access to the data concerned and data would be managed in accordance with data protection law and the Council's own policies. No monitoring of emails was performed on an ongoing or proactive basis.

- **Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Atterwill stated that the response that he had received said that it applied to Members and Officers alike - that emails could be monitored. He felt that this disclaimer was not actually correct, as his understanding was that Councillors were not actually employees. The reason he had raised this stemmed from a concern received from a resident doing case work; therefore, when it clearly stated that emails were being monitored, he wanted to be able to assure that person that email correspondence between him, as a Member of the Council and residents, was in fact private. He felt that the disclaimer needed to be updated to make it clear that it applied to Members and employees. The response had not stated who in the organisation would make that decision. It had stated however, that it was Human Resources who dealt with this but as a Councillor he was not aware that he came under HR. Therefore, he wanted to know who in the organisation, the actual name of the person, who would authorise such monitoring of email activity and who the persons were who would carry out that monitoring.

Councillor Atterwill did not expect an immediate response but would appreciate further clarification on that point. This supplementary question would also be put in writing to the Member concerned to make this point clear.

- **Response:**

The Executive Director, Strategy & Governance said that she would be happy to provide a written response; however, she had not seen sight of the original response sent to Councillor Atterwill. Members were assured however, that it would be herself, as the Council's Monitoring Officer who would monitor Members' emails and that it would be HR for Officers. She apologised to Councillor Atterwill for the slightly incorrect information contained in the disclaimer which would be changed accordingly.

- **Question received from Councillor Harry Clarke to the Executive Member of Planning:**

The Government were consulting on Planning changes, through the White Paper "Planning for the Future", and also "Changes to the current planning system" (different national deadlines apply).

Councillor Clarke was particularly concerned about two aspects - the impact under the White Paper on the funding and future viability of Social Housing Providers, and also the temporary (at present) proposal to increase the threshold where affordable housing was required from developers to a trigger of 40- 50 units.

As a Dereham Councillor he was already concerned at infrastructure issues, without a projected 74.8% increase in housing allocations across Breckland of an extra 1,070 houses to be built per annum. Specifically:

- if Breckland Council makes a formal response to either of the consultation documents, would this be viewable by Members?
- would any response from the Council be published publicly?
- would the commentary prepared by Planning Officers on both papers for Members be published publicly?
- would the Council be engaging at all in any consultations with the Councils current Social / Housing providers?

- **Response:**

As had been correctly identified there were two consultation papers currently being considered in relation to changes to the Planning System. These papers have different closing dates with the Changes to the Planning System paper closing on 1st October and the Planning for the Future White Paper closing on 29th October.

Members had seen a full presentation on both these papers at a Briefing held on 15th September 2020 and had been given the opportunity to submit comments via the Planning Policy inbox to enable their comments to be taken into account when finalising the consultation response.

The following comments were made in respect of the above questions:

- Given the tight timescales for the first consultation response this would be considered by the Executive and submitted on behalf of the Council. The concerns of Members would be reflected in the consultation response. In relation to the second consultation this would be presented to the Executive with an invitation to Members to attend and comment on the response.

- There was no reason why the response should not be made public after submission.
- The presentation by Officers to Members was for their information and to stimulate debate. Given that status it was not considered to be appropriate to make this public.
- Officers, in preparing their response, had consulted with the Housing Strategy Team. Independent Social Housing Providers would be able to respond separately to the consultation process.

- **Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Clarke wanted to ask a question in respect of the response to the final question above but as the Executive Member for Planning had sent his apologies, a written request would be sent instead. Councillor Clarke also asked if a virtual meeting could be arranged with himself, the Executive Member for Planning and the Leader to discuss how Social Housing Providers in Breckland could be affected by the Government's White Paper and the Affordable Homes Programme, as he was aware that these could have an impact on funding and sustainability issues.

- **Response:**

The Leader said that he would be happy to discuss these matters further with Councillor Clarke once the written request had been received.

- **Question received from Councillor Tim Birt to the Executive Member for Customer Engagement:**

The need for a Carbon Audit to start measuring the Council's carbon emissions had been raised in January when funding was deemed to not be a problem.

It was extremely disappointing to now learn that the Council could not undertake a full Carbon Audit because the relevant organisations were busy carrying out audits for other Councils. Applying for the LGA Net Zero Innovation Programme was a noble aspiration and he hoped that the Council succeeded but there were only ten places so the competition would be strong. Many believed that the Council needed to show greater urgency rather than putting all efforts in one direction, also alternative solutions needed to be pursued.

1. What alternative solutions have been considered?
2. Why had the Council been unable to quantify its carbon consumption using simple tools and existing consumption data?
3. Had the LGA Carbon Accounting tool been reviewed?
4. What would be the net carbon saving per year from the Council's switch to a renewable electricity supplier (both for Breckland and the UK as a whole)?

- **Response:**

Further to his last update at Cabinet, Councillor Sherwood was pleased to report that the Council had been approached by several providers who were keen to work with Breckland on this opportunity. He was pleased to announce that the opportunity would be awarded in the next few days but obviously as this formed part of an active procurement exercise, he was unable to disclose the full details at this time, but it was his intention to do so in the next week.

Regarding your question about using simple tools and existing consumption data, the Council had considered using these but the majority did not enable those emissions to be identified, this sat under Scope 3 of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol which was an internationally recognised accounting tool for this, to the level that could be understood. As this was the first time Breckland was undertaking a carbon audit and developing a carbon management plan it was important to ensure that this was done from a solid evidence base which was why, on this occasion, the Cabinet had felt that engaging a recognised and respected expert/organisation to conduct this piece of work was fundamental. This would not be the only time the Council would need to carry out a carbon audit as this would need to be carried out again in the future to measure the Council's success. Going forward, and once a robust baseline had been established the intention was to use tools like the LGA Carbon Accounting tool.

The switch to green energy would save the Council an estimated 357.55 tonnes of carbon per year. To provide some context to this figure, many of the carbon think tanks placed annual personal carbon usage at 10-12 tonnes, this would mean that the estimated equivalent of 30-36 people's tonnage per year would be saved.

- **Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Birt had noted from the responses provided above that a contractor/service provider would be appointed by the Council to carry out a carbon audit and he hoped that further information on this matter would be announced shortly.

He had also asked if any tools were being considered such as the LGA's Carbon Accounting Tool but the response that had been provided stated that this tool did not sit under the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol. Councillor Birt could not recall any requirement under the Council's declaration of Climate Emergency for that to be a condition. It was also stated that the LGA Tool would be used going forward and he could not see any reason why such a tool could not be used already, there was no reason to wait as this could be carried out simultaneously with any external audit.

He asked for clarification on what had been reported in respect of the switch to renewable energy saving an estimated 357.55 tonnes of carbon which he felt was a good estimate. He knew that this saving was merely an accounting function as the Council had not actually reflected how the electricity was produced or whether it had reduced its consumption. The Executive Member for Customer Engagement had then compared this with personal carbon usage of 10 to 12 tonnes per year per person. This number he felt was widely different to the normal per capita figure and was very similar to the CO2 capita figure which then begged the question

- was that very precise 357.55 tonnes a carbon saving or was it a carbon dioxide equivalent saving?

- **Response:**

The Executive Member for Customer Engagement & Member Champion for Breckland Sustainability Strategy thanked Councillor Birt for his question and comments. He felt that the details included in the written response were clear but would respond to each comment/question in order.

He was pleased to announce that a company had very recently been appointed to carry out the Council's carbon audit. Full details would be sent out to all Members accordingly. This was a very good company who worked with local Councils across the country and had a very good track record so he hoped that Members would be satisfied with this decision. In relation to the figures, in respect of the tonnage saved of carbon per year, the said company had been asked for such details, and the specific questions that had been asked by Cllr Birt would also be put forward.

- **Question received from Councillor David Wickerson to the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets:**

Would the Finance Officer please advise whether the Council had conducted a Commercial Asset Portfolio review, previously valued at £45 million, in the light of the impact of Covid 19. If so, could Members be advised of the results of said review?

In addition could the Executive Member for Contracts and Assets please provide a report to Members on the current status of the Council's financial arrangements with Barnham Broom following the reduction in the rental income, and to include confirmation as to whether this investment was still considered viable and beneficial to the Breckland taxpayer?

- **Response:**

The Executive Member for Contracts & Assets advised that the Council's commercial property portfolio was valued annually with a valuation date of 31 March in accordance with local government accountancy requirements. Therefore, the last valuation had been undertaken 31 March 2020. The property assets that the Council denoted as commercial property used for investment return as at 31 March 2020 had a total value of £48.8m.

At that last valuation, the Valuer highlighted the risk of the impact of Covid and advised that the property values should be kept under review. This was followed up in July with the Valuer who confirmed that the valuations were still valid, there had been no significant decrease but the impact of Covid was difficult to assess. These 31 March 2020 valuations, including the potential impact of Covid, had also been considered by the Council's external auditors, Ernst & Young (EY) as part of the Statement of Accounts audit prior to the accounts being allowed to be signed off at the Governance & Audit Committee. If EY determined that any of the values were significantly mis-stated this would be highlighted in their audit report and valuations amended accordingly. We would next be revisiting the valuations in February 2021 under the normal annual re-valuation exercise.

Action By

Members would also be aware that there had been a presentation on the commercial property portfolio at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 16 July 2020 – the purpose of which was to provide an update on the portfolio in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In respect of Barnham Broom question, the information that could be shared regarding commercial property transactions in the public domain was limited due to commercial confidentiality relating to the disclosure of certain information that could prejudice a business' trading performance.

The hospitality and leisure sectors have been hit particularly hard with Covid-19 and as the business operating from this asset was in that sector it was possibly the case for this business.

As Members would also be aware, the Council decided to review its commercial relationship with the tenant of this asset in October 2018. Since then, there had been no further changes so the Council still owned the asset as it had done since the purchase with the same tenant. At this point in time there had not been any agreement to vary any rental payment obligations for this tenant in light of Covid. The tenant was in contact with the Council Officers on a regular basis.

Based on the current agreed contractual arrangements with the tenant the investment was viable and provided a positive return thus a benefit to the taxpayer.

- **Supplementary Question:**
Councillor Wickerson thanked the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets for his response to his questions on Barnham Broom and the commercial assets and as his follow up question was quite detailed, he would put it in writing for a subsequent response.
- **Question received from Councillor Philip Morton to Executive Member for Customer Engagement:**

It was now nearly a year since a Climate Change Emergency was declared. The Leader then called upon the Council to develop its commitment and implementation of an overarching and achievable sustainable Breckland Strategy. This would set out the policies, strategies, implementation plans and resourcing requirements to embed the values of sustainability into the Council's services, delivery and operations. The Council would work with key stakeholders across the District, including Norfolk County Council, neighbouring local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership, businesses and of course, its residents who could contribute to a Sustainable Breckland Strategy. Members had been assured that Cabinet would be discussing this Strategy early in 2020.

To expedite meaningful progress, he asked the Cabinet Member for Sustainability if a Cross Party Working Group could be created where the Breckland Strategy outlined by the Leader could be discussed and developed in a transparent cross-party approach?

- **Response:**

Members were asked to recall that in February of this year, Councillor

Sherwood stated his intention that a one off forum for Members would be arranged to allow all those that wished to participate to feed into the development process. As he had previously stated the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had meant that the Council's resources had rightly been focused on supporting its residents and businesses through the pandemic and the ongoing recovery from it. This had unfortunately meant that a number of Council's core objectives had been delayed whilst resources were directed elsewhere. He was pleased to say; however, that the Council was now in a position to hold a one off Members Environment and Climate Change Forum which would enable Members to scrutinise and input into the Council's proposed strategy and delivery plan.

- **Supplementary question:**

Councillor Morton had suggested that a cross party working group be established for sustainability and climate change to speed up progress and to develop the strategy to implementation. There had been a six-month period prior to Covid when a carbon audit could have rolled out and he was sure that with the establishment of a cross party working group actions would have been taken. A one-off Climate Emergency Forum would also be useful along the lines that had been adopted for the Covid emergency. He asked what assurances Councillor Sherwood could provide that more rapid progress would be made in developing and delivering the strategy.

- **Response:**

Councillor Sherwood thanked Councillor Morton for his further question and comments. He felt that it was important to advise what had already been stated earlier that it was a very difficult situation that the Country had found itself in, in respect of this national pandemic including the re-deployment of staff. Many areas of work within the Council were extremely important and climate change was one of those which had been recognised. He hoped that Councillor Morton would be pleased that he had already indicated that all Councillors would be invited to the Forum to enable them to contribute and have input and scrutinise the policies going forward. This Forum would be held at the end of October and would allow for a full and open discussion and Members would have the opportunity to have input into this on-going policy. He himself was extremely disappointed that there had been delays but he was very comfortable that the Council was working hard to ensure that this was right for residents of Breckland.

65/20 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Councillor Crane addressed her question to Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets.

Prior to Covid-19, the Council had agreed to change the way it worked, and she asked if the plans in respect of the Worksmart 20:20 initiative, following the impact of the pandemic, were now on hold.

In response, Councillor Hewett advised that understandably, a number of initiatives had been put on hold as the offices were closed and staff had been re-located and re-directed to frontline essential services that had been described in the presentation held earlier in the meeting.

He felt that in many ways, the speed of reaction and the ability to change, in every aspect in what the Council did, had been a testament to the resilience of staff, the

focus of the leadership team and the underlying ambitions of Worksmart 20:20.

He was delighted to announce that works to the Breckland Conference Centre, which it would now be called, using local builders and specialists had continued at pace over the last couple of months and the new Anglia, Norfolk and Dereham Rooms would be ready to resume full face to face or hybrid face to face on-line meetings as soon as legislation allowed. Members would see a smart new reception area, new furniture, which was flexible and adaptable, particularly for paying users, new quiet air conditioning and air extraction systems, and along with 'state of the art' IT systems meant that meetings would be accessible and could be enjoyed by everyone.

Focus was now on the first floor of the Elizabeth House, creating an environment for the Council's hardworking staff which he felt would be exciting, vibrant and ready for the future – in many ways, reflecting the legacy of the departing Chief Executive. All in the Worksmart Steering Group, that included Members and Officers, were keen to see this progress and create a Council that met the needs of Members, Officers, residents and businesses alike to allow everyone in Breckland to thrive.

Councillor Kybird directed his question to Councillor Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement & Member Champion for Breckland Sustainability Strategy.

In respect of the Climate Emergency, he welcomed the appointment to carry out the Council's carbon audit and he asked if there were any plans to recruit specialist staff to help deliver this audit and the actions thereafter as necessary.

Councillor Sherwood knew that Councillor Kybird was extremely passionate about the environment and his input and comments received over the past few months had been incredibly useful and he thanked him for this information and the areas that he had highlighted.

He was delighted to announce that the Council would be recruiting a fixed term Officer and the advertisement for that post would soon be published. This clearly highlighted the commitment of this Council and once this audit had been completed, there would be a full-time Officer who would be responsible for pushing this policy forward and assisting the Council with what the Councillors had chosen to do.

Prior to any further questions being asked, Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group, raised a point of Order in respect of Standing Order No. 7; in particular, section 7.7 and reminded the meeting that the Leader of the largest opposition group should be afforded the right to ask the first question.

The Executive Manager for Governance apologised for the oversight and confirmed that the order for questions should begin with the Leader of the largest opposition group, followed by the leaders of other opposition groups in the order of their respective group size.

Councillor Jermy directed his question to Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Health & Housing.

Homelessness was a significant concern in Breckland and with the colder weather approaching and the impact that this would have on these individuals would be more severe. He asked Councillor Webb what the current situation was in respect

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of homelessness in the District and what steps were going to be taken in advance of the winter months.

Councillor Webb advised that this question was quite timely as the Council had just received some additional Government funding which would assist with this challenge. The amount received was just under £115k which would help provide emergency temporary accommodation for rough sleepers. The funding would also be put towards appointing a Housing Support & Resettlement Officer to help rough sleepers to move on to more permanent accommodation and gain employment.

Since the Covid outbreak, the number of rough sleepers in the District had been halved and she felt that the Team involved with this work should be congratulated. Unfortunately, there would always be homelessness issues and this funding would continue to help the Council provide assistance and guidance in future.

Councillor Atterwill directed his question to the Leader.

He asked the Leader if he felt that the Government's initiative to introduce Covid Marshalls was a good idea and as such would he be seeking to introduce them in Breckland.

In response the Leader advised that every council across the country would have a different view and opinion, but in the case of Breckland, the introduction of Marshalls would not be progressed, and he understood that none of his Norfolk colleagues would be either.

Cllr Birt also directed his question to the Leader which was in relation to Breckland Standards system

A formal complaint had been made against him by the Chairman in respect of not being appropriately dressed and not using the correct corporate background during a Zoom meeting.

He had been notified that four formal complaints had been made against him but at the time of that notification none had been received. He felt there were significant problems with the Council's standards procedure and explained that it had taken a further two weeks before the Chairman's complaint surfaced and another week before he received the second similar complaint.

He felt that there were procedural errors including staff being unaware of a relevant protocol.

He had been accused of criticising officers and, as a consequence, breaching the Code of Conduct. Councillor Birt made it clear that he had, and was permitted to, criticise the Council. He was not criticising individual officers as all were working extremely hard in difficult conditions.

Councillor Birt considered that Breckland Standards was systemically failing and had been politically manipulated and he asked the Leader if he would urgently implement an external review so that residents of Breckland could have confidence that both District and Parish councillors were accountable against a functioning fair and proper system.

The Leader advised that he was unable to comment on any complaints against any individual. Councillor Birt had been notified privately in relation to this complaint and it was his prerogative to make it public. In relation to his concerns about the

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complaints process and the standards process, the Monitoring Officer would consider his concerns and determine if any particular course of action was necessary.

Councillor James asked if Councillor Bambridge, the Executive Member for Environmental Services & Public Protection would join her in thanking the Officer for the successful pursuit of fly-tippers. She had received positive feedback from the residents within Castle Ward in Thetford and asked if there was any educational information available to support and enhance this invaluable work. She also asked how the receipts from these fines were being spent or re-invested.

Councillor Bambridge was pleased that this question had been asked as it gave him the opportunity to first point out that many updates had been provided in the earlier presentation as well as the chance to thank all Officers involved for their support despite them being directly involved in Covid matters. He also felt that thanks needed to be conveyed to the whole of the Environmental Services Team who had worked very effectively in dealing with fly-tippers and littering in Breckland.

Many fines, as well as fixed penalty notices had been issued. Certain areas were going to be targeted for a letter drop and posters would also be circulated within the District - obviously in various languages and it was hoped that this work would be implemented early in October. Other matters being considered were an increase to penalties and further scope for the Council to take necessary actions against fly-tippers or victims of fly-tipping. Cooperation with other bodies was also being increased. Members were informed that the two main areas that would be targeted were Thetford and Watton but other areas that had such problems would also be considered.

Councillor Bambridge advised that the Council was also considering increasing the Enforcement Team to assist with these matters, this would hopefully, allow more work to be taken on going forward to improve the District.

Councillor Duigan directed his question to the Executive Member responsible for mobile phones, Councillor Suggitt, Executive Member for Governance.

He asked if advice or any instructions could be provided to Members on how to download the Covid App.

In response, Members were informed that advice would be sought from the IT Officers and sent out to Members accordingly.

Councillor Gilbert asked the Leader if he had discovered a mistake that the Council had made several years ago that was affecting many people and asked if this could be rectified.

The Leader invited Councillor Gilbert to provide further information so that he could understand the nature of the concern.

Councillor Brindle asked Councillor Bambridge a question on the environment in respect of the river systems in Thetford. Currently, they were all in a poor condition due to lack of rain, over extraction and fallen trees and he had grave concerns with the Little Ouse which was a chalk stream and therefore very delicate. He knew of an all -party group that had recently been formed to look at chalk streams. Their first meeting had been held very recently and he asked Councillor Bambridge if he could make representations to this Group on behalf of the Council to establish what

could be done and make the necessary improvements to the river system in Thetford and the nearby villages.

Councillor Bambridge asked Councillor Brindle if this could be discussed further after the meeting. He was aware of this newly formed Group and he was also aware that over 80% of the UK's main chalk streams were located in East Anglia. This was something that was of great interest to him but he was aware of other bodies that looked after the Little Ouse which could be easily be contacted through the Environment Agency. He also reminded Members that environmental issues were being dealt with by Councillor Sherwood as the Council's Sustainability Strategy Champion.

Councillor Dowling directed her question to the Leader.

Over the past few months, she had volunteered as a telephone befriender calling vulnerable residents as part of a welfare check. It was clear that there were many people in the Breckland area who were isolated and very lonely. With Covid-19 showing no immediate end this would inevitably continue although many regular support groups remained closed or virtual. She asked what the Council could do to ensure that residents, who did not or could not access technology, were not left behind in the months ahead.

The Leader advised that throughout the pandemic many lessons had been learnt as to how to support those considered most vulnerable and for those in self-isolation. Breckland Council was continuing to work with partners across Norfolk such as the Norfolk Community Foundation and Age UK to establish how, through the winter period, those most vulnerable residents could be supported that were not reliant on modern technology. The 'befriending' telephone service had been immensely successful, and Council Members were able to volunteer if they so wished with training sessions being organised.

He asked Councillor Dowling to contact him after the meeting to discuss this further.

The Chairman pointed out that several Members were already in contact with vulnerable residents in their areas and she herself, made such calls once a week, and she had found that most of the time, all these residents wanted was to hear a friendly voice on the other end of the phone.

As many Members were Market Town Champions, Councillor Colman asked Councillor Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture if he agreed that the recent successful High Street Heritage Action Zone bid would be a great opportunity to build on the work that this Council already did to champion its market towns. He looked forward to working with Councillor Robinson and colleagues within the Ward to deliver what could be an exciting project for Swaffham.

Councillor Robinson welcomed the above comments and agreed that this would be a fantastic opportunity but felt it would be better to respond to Councillor Colman's question when the report was discussed under the next item on the agenda.

66/20 SWAFFHAM HIGH STREETS HERITAGE ACTION ZONE GRANT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Councillor Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture presented the report.

The report asked Members to consider and accept the grant of £380,000 from Historic England as partnership funding to support the Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone over a four-year period 2020-2024.

Councillor Robinson was pleased to bring this item forward as the Council continued to support its five market towns. He reminded Members that in 2019, Historic England launched the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Programme (HSHAZ) through funding from the Government's 'Towns Funds', providing £45m for prospective bids in England to unlock the potential in its High streets. The programme objectives were explained. Swaffham with its rich history had been considered as a potential HSHAZ location with its iconic Buttercross that formed a central focus to the Market Place that had been gifted to the town by George Walpole in 1783 as well as the many other listed buildings within the heritage Action Zone area.

An Expression of Interest was submitted to Historic England in July 2019 and following approval Breckland Council was required to submit a Programme Design Plan (attached at Appendix 1 to the report). Following a three-month national assessment period, Breckland Council was provided with approved funds of £380,000 as part of a total programme cost of £697,900 to deliver the HSHAZ over a four-year period from 2020-2024.

The Programme Design Plan identified the actions to be financed through the scheme and provided the details of confirmed and partnership match funding that had been initially approved by the Council in Support of the Swaffham HSHAZ in February 2020.

The Programme would require daily management and monitoring and continuous reporting to Historic England as the accountable body over the four-year period. Therefore, the recruitment of a Project Officer would be central to achieving both successful delivery whilst working with a wide range of stakeholders, and ensuring that the processes and procedures required to adhere to the opportunities and constraints of the HSHAZ were followed and met.

Following on from his earlier question, Councillor Colman felt that this was something that should be celebrated, and he hoped that all Members would support this unprecedented investment in one of Breckland's Market Towns.

Councillor Ian Sherwood, as one of the Ward Members for Swaffham, was delighted with what Breckland Council had achieved. He thanked the Executive Member, Councillor Robinson, and the Team for all their hard work. He had been overwhelmed by the result and this funding would be an enormous help in the town of Swaffham, which he considered to be the heart of Breckland. He pointed out that this investment would filter out into the hinterlands so everyone who used the town would benefit.

Given current circumstances with the pandemic, Councillor Bushell asked Councillor Robinson if the initiative for the five market towns would still be able to be undertaken.

Members were informed that the Match Funding from the Council's Inclusive Growth Reserve for the Market Town initiative would continue to be supported for all five towns and he was sure that the £50,000 per annum over a three year period that had been set aside, given the current climate, would be much needed and welcomed.

As another Ward Member for Swaffham, Councillor Wickerson had been involved in this matter from the start, and he thanked the Officers and the Executive Member for all their support. He also conveyed his thanks to John Mullen, the External Funding Officer, for discovering this opportunity with Historic England. He was very conscious of the huge amount of work carried out in order to be one of only 62 towns in the Country that had benefited from this particular funding. There was a great deal of hard work ahead, and he looked forward to working with the Team.

Councillor Hewett congratulated the Executive Member and the Officers for this successful bid. It reflected a great deal of hard work and a huge amount of effort behind the scenes and was great news for Swaffham.

Councillor Clarke also congratulated all concerned on the project and hoped that the same methodology could be used and applied for the other towns in Breckland and asked if he could meet virtually with colleagues to discuss condition surveys etc for other towns going forward.

Councillor Borrett echoed the comments already made and congratulated Mark Robinson, the Cabinet Member for this work. This was a great piece of news and it showed the depths and strengths of the Team and the Leader who supported the market town initiative. Many villages surrounding the towns relied on the facilities and were intrinsically linked and hoped that more funding would be forthcoming for other towns.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED that:

1. the grant of £380,000 from Historic England to support the Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone be accepted;
2. the Executive Director of Place be given delegated authority to sign the contract with Historic England on behalf of the Council;
3. the Executive Director of Place be given delegated authority to manage the scheme and allocate grants in accordance with the terms of the contract and in consultation, where appropriate, with Historic England; and
4. the Executive Director of Place be given authority to appoint on a temporary contract a Project Manager to oversee the scheme.

67/20 REVISED BUDGET 2020-21 (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Councillor Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth presented the report.

In these unprecedented times he doubted whether anyone could recall an instance when the Council had to consider a change to the budget part way through a fiscal year.

COVID 19 has had a significant impact on the workings and financial status of Councils throughout the United Kingdom and Breckland was no exception.

Earlier in the year, in June 2020, an interim report was presented on the likely and

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potential impact of COVID 19 on the budget that had been set prior to the outbreak.

The report now being considered contained two recommendations that were related directly to the impact of the pandemic and the likely cost effects having been drawn out of the Quarter One financial report that had been presented to the Cabinet meeting held earlier in the month on 7 September 2020.

Losses had been suffered through reductions in the Council's income streams as shown in paragraph 1.3 of the report. The Council had also experienced additional costs as identified in paragraph 1.4 of the report. Government support had been targeted at some of the gaps the pandemic had created and whilst substantial, it had not fully funded the budget gap resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

However, Breckland Council through its prudent fiscal management had been able to absorb the majority of the financial gap by drawing down Reserves as shown in Appendix A of the report and the Council was confident that it should be able to put in place measures to address the £217k shortfall.

Furthermore, despite all the disruption, redeployment and change of working practices that staff had faced in the last 6 months, the Council Taxpayers of Breckland had been provided with an uninterrupted service. Bins had been emptied regularly, planning applications had been processed, communities had been supported and housing needs had been met.

Councillor Cowen thanked all the Teams within Breckland Council who had worked in challenging and often difficult circumstances to put this revised budget together. This had been a workstream that they had never encountered before and hopefully one which would not occur again.

Full details that supported the revised budget had been set out in the report and appendices.

The recommendations were then commended to Members for approval.

Councillor Bushell asked if the Executive Member could confirm whether the Council could still deliver its growth agenda, having regard to the drain on finances as result of the Covid 19 outbreak had placed on the budget. She also thanked the Officers who had worked diligently throughout.

In response, Councillor Cowen advised that the report highlighted the significant sums that had to be drawn down from the Council's Reserves in order to bridge the gap. He drew attention to section 1.6 of the report that stated very clearly the great deal of work the Council was currently engaged in such as the HIF project in Thetford, the Snetterton power project as well as many others some of which were externally funded, but all would enable growth in the District and have an effect on many people and businesses as a result. Government plans in respect of the Autumn budget had been paused and news was anxiously awaited. One could only assume that there would be more assistance for businesses. The more businesses that survived this pandemic, together with the funding that Breckland Council put in place would help to enable the District to build back stronger. He did want to put Breckland Council in a strong and viable position moving forward and the budget proposal would leave the 'head room' to undertake that.

Councillor Birt recognised the position that the Council was in but had every confidence that it would remain on top of its financial constraints. He mentioned the Council's assets, and the impact of the reduction in value to the asset register

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and asked how this would be recorded and whether this would have an impact on the long-term income to this Council.

In response, Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets referred Councillor Birt to Councillor Wickerson's Question on Notice under agenda item 7 to which a response had been provided. However, the most recent asset valuation as of March 2020 had been reconfirmed in July as being at approximately the right level. All were very conscious of an uncertain future and accordingly the Council's assets were currently being monitored. It was working with all tenants, as any responsible landlord would, and rigorous processes were being applied whilst also taking into account that all tenants formed part of Breckland's communities.

Councillor Jermy did not have any specific questions about the detail within the budget report but thanked Councillor Cowen for his presentation. At this time of the year the Executive Member and the Finance Team would be thinking about next year's budget and he asked the Executive Member if any thought had been given as to how Members would be involved in this process taking into account the uncertainties and concerns surrounding this matter.

Councillor Cowen agreed that it was going to be a challenge in setting any future budgets but as far as Member involvement was concerned any suggestions and opportunities would be welcomed going forward. However, looking at the wider picture there were other aspects in putting the Council's budget together such as the Worksmart 20:20 programme which would, in itself, have an impact on the Council's costs. This particular year would be a challenge and would be somewhat different from those that had been experienced in the past for various reasons not least Covid.

Councillor Borrett felt that this was a very testing time for all concerned in local government finance but due to the decisions that Members had consistently taken over a number of years, Breckland Council had no borrowing, it had large amounts of Reserves and had used those Reserves to invest and generate income for the Council. He congratulated the Cabinet Member and supported the recommendations contained within the report.

Councillor Askew asked the Executive Member if he agreed with him that Covid-19 had proved the importance of maintaining healthy Reserves and he supported the recommendations.

Councillor Cowen advised that the majority of local Councils across the East Anglia region were no different to Breckland as all had been very good at maintaining their Reserves.

Councillor Morton thanked Councillor Cowen and the Finance Team for presenting a budget under very difficult times. He asked for clarification on two points about lost income, the first being the commercial services provision being 86% down on budget and asked if there was a possibility that this might be clawed back with any extra business as the Planning department had been experiencing. Also, in respect of investment interest, he had been surprised to note that it had gone down so much.

In terms of Planning, Councillor Cowen advised that planning applications had risen by 20% compared to this time last year and there was an expectation that the local economy was still growing in some areas. As far as the commercial services provision and the 86% decrease, this had not been a surprise, but there had been enormous support from Government to enable those businesses to keep going and

as a responsible landlord to its tenants the Council was doing all it could to ensure that its tenants remained in business. The Council's assets were currently undergoing a major audit and the external auditors had provided assurance that these values were accurate. Regarding investments, part of that included Breckland Bridge and unfortunately a great deal of that work had not been as forthcoming as the Council would have liked due to the pandemic. However, the major scheme in Attleborough was still on-going and the dwellings were continually being sold and, consequently receipts from the loans were expected.

Members were informed that if any further detail was required on commercial services provision, Ralph Burton, the Strategic Property Manager in conjunction with Councillor Hewett would be able to provide this information.

After being proposed and seconded, and subject to one abstention, it was:

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the additional revenue costs, funding and use of reserves as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved; and
- 2) the changes to the capital programme set out in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report be approved.

68/20 WORKFORCE PLAN 2020-2023 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

Councillor Suggitt, the Executive Member for Governance presented the report that asked Members to consider and approve changes to the revised Workforce Strategy as a result of Covid-19.

In 2019, the current Workforce Strategy had been published but for obvious reasons, the current pandemic had changed the work considerably.

The Workforce Strategy took account of the aims of the People Plan and was linked to and supported the Council's strategic priorities as part of the Corporate Plan.

It ensured the Council had the right people, with the right skills, in the right jobs and it was imperative that staff were trusted and empowered. The development of programmes to support managers and individuals in agile working resilience, staying digitally connected, being outcome focused in their delivery and to balance the need for face to face collaboration and agile working was extremely important.

The changes to the Workforce Strategy and the recommendations were highlighted.

Councillor Birt appreciated the flexibility that the Council was going to need going forward but wanted to know when this document might be updated in the future as he had noticed that one of the characterising terms that had been used before had been removed. He had also noticed that the document used 'generation y' or 'millennials' and since these could be morphed into derogatory terms he felt that in a report such as this the Council, in future, should not use these vernacular terms but have a better definition.

Councillor Suggitt noted Councillor Birt's comments and would take them forward accordingly.

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Councillor Hewett reflected the excellent work of the staff whilst lives and the workplace had been overturned by Covid., He felt that this document linked really neatly into the work that the Council was doing in respect of the Worksmart 20:20, not just in terms of agile working, but in terms of an agile office space, a space that was fit for purpose for the foreseeable future. He congratulated the Executive Member on the report and the work that the Team had done and commended the recommendations for approval.

After being proposed and seconded, it was:

RESOLVED that the Workforce Strategy 2019 -2023 (revised following CV19) be approved.

69/20 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 12)

None.

70/20 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (AGENDA ITEM 13)

None.

71/20 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (AGENDA ITEM 14)

None.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN

Critical Services Cell Update

RIANA RUDLAND AND SARAH SHIPLEY

24/9/20

The Cell

- ▶ ARP
- ▶ Facilities Management
- ▶ Private Sector Housing
- ▶ Public Protection and Licensing
- ▶ Corporate Health and Safety
- ▶ Environmental Services
- ▶ Enforcement
- ▶ Emergency Planning
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Building Control
- ▶ PPE working group
- ▶ Leisure

Lead reps for:

- Tactical Coordination Group
- Social Distancing
- Normalisation cell
- Transient communities / housing
- Domestic abuse
- Mortality pathway

The early days.....

- ▶ Site visits stopped for all services and Staff were redeployed to other cells
- ▶ Public Protection supported and enforced where required social distancing/closure requirements and provided support to businesses to continue trading safely
- ▶ Council buildings were prepped to be Covid compliant
- ▶ Significant amount of multi-agency working

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▶ Exiting Lockdown.....

- ▶ Site visit protocol and safe systems of work agreed and rolled out to all services – risk assessments in place for all visits
- ▶ Site visits commence in a phased manner
- ▶ Staff returned from redeployment
- ▶ New demands on services especially Public protection and enforcement

Success stories.....

- ▶ Elizabeth House and Breck House Covid compliant for staff who have needed to access the office
- ▶ All rough sleepers accommodated
- ▶ 148 fly-tipping / littering enforcement cases received compared to 75 in same period last year
- ▶ 99 fly-tipping / littering cases taken forward to investigation
- ▶ 40 warnings and 15 FPN's issued
- ▶ 30 Fly-tipping / littering active cases ongoing
- ▶ All services conducting site visits in a safe manner
- ▶ ARP back to BAU
- ▶ Covid compliance and food safety / statutory inspections underway
- ▶ Land management and facilities management services operational
- ▶ 2 unauthorised encampments resolved

Success stories continued.....

- ▶ 719 planning applications received since lockdown
- ▶ 907 planning applications determined since lockdown
- ▶ 677 Building control site visits made
- ▶ 207 planning enforcements complaints resolved
- ▶ Introduction of virtual Chairman's Panel and Planning Committee
- ▶ 2,378 new Garden waste subscriptions April-August
- ▶ 1672 new brown bins delivered
- ▶ Bins collected from 62,427 properties per week
- ▶ 300 Environmental Services queries dealt with
- ▶ 3% reduction in recycling contamination (year to date) 15.5% down to 12.5%
- ▶ Percentage material recycled and composted risen from 31% (Q4 2019) to 42% (Q1 2020)

More Success.....

- ▶ Mobilisation of the new waste contract on target. NNDC mobilised with minimal disruption during lockdown
- ▶ New fleet vehicle build slots secured
- ▶ Work commenced on early introduction of Trade waste service
- ▶ Leisure centres re-opened in a phased manner and steady trend of increased usage reported
- ▶ 31 Swaffham / Attleborough leisure project commenced
- ▶ Land charges, tree works and street naming works continues
- ▶ 26 Caravan site licencing inspections completed
- ▶ 2 emergency HHSRS inspections completed
- ▶ DFG applications and works re-started
- ▶ 11 Enhance grants awarded
- ▶ Housing Service review commenced

And finally!

- ▶ 179 food businesses supported to convert safely to provide a take away service during lockdown
- ▶ All licensed premises were proactively contacted ahead of 4 July to support their safe re-opening
- ▶ Outbreak planning toolkits have been provided to all businesses
- ▶ All medium/large food manufacturers have received proactive advice from the team on outbreak planning and infection control
- ▶ Officers from Public Protection are playing a significant part along with other agencies in managing the Banham Poultry outbreak
- ▶ Team managing advice and impacts large number of events / gatherings in District
- ▶ Fatalities at Snetterton
- ▶ 10 Welfare Burials
- ▶ Unexploded bomb multi-agency response
- ▶ Covid Testing sites sourced
- ▶ PPE sourced and supplied to staff