
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Held on Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 10.00 am in
Anglia Room, The Conference Centre, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Cllr Lynda Turner (Chairman)
Cllr Linda Monument
Cllr Robert Hambidge

Cllr Susan Dowling
Cllr Phillip Duigan (Substitute Member)

Also Present

Cllr Gordon Bambridge
Cllr Timothy Birt

Cllr Jane James

In Attendance

Sarah Barsby	- Assistant Director People and Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Claire Burton	- Organisational Development Performance Manager
Sue Daniels	- Electoral Services Team Leader
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

**Action
By**

30/22 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31/22 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Ashby. Councillor Duigan was in attendance as his substitute.

32/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

No declarations were made.

33/22 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

34/22 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The following non-Members were in attendance:

Councillor Bambridge as the Ward Member for Sparham, Councillor James as the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services and Councillor Birt.

35/22 MEMBER TRAINING (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 6)

This matter was discussed under Agenda item 9.

36/22 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - SPARHAM PC (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Councillor James, the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services introduced the report.

Rory Ringer, the Democratic Services Manager explained that this report followed a request from Sparham Parish Council to carry out a Community Governance Review with a view to increase their membership of their parish council from 5 members to 7. The Committee must be aware when undertaking such reviews that the community governance in the area reflected the identities and the interests of the community and was effective and convenient. It was also important that the recommendations made through such a review should bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy, and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

The review had been based on 3 main elements; firstly, to increase resilience, secondly, to aid succession planning and finally to provide additional support for parishioners. The current electorate for the parish of Sparham was 246 and the increase in parish councillors to 7 would be in line with the majority of similar sized parishes in the district.

The recommendation was read aloud.

Councillor Bambridge did not have any questions but as the elected member for Sparham he wanted to support the parish in this move as the additional support was required.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED that the request from Sparham Parish Council to carry out a Community Governance review be approved, and delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive to conduct and implement the review.

37/22 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD) AND PEOPLE STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Councillor James, the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services introduced the report and was pleased to present the Organisational Development & People Strategy (OD&P).

In terms of background, the Council currently had a workforce plan that ran from 2020 until 2023 that set out ways the Council supported and developed its staff through the Council's strategic priorities. Given the new focus on a pro-active, longer-term and strategic view of people development, described as organisational development, an opportunity had been taken to review this Plan for it to be a jointly owned document between Organisational Development and Human Resources. This new OD&P Strategy for 2022 to 2025 would help the Council to ensure that it had the right people with the right skills in the right role, performing the right tasks to support the Council's strategic priorities.

Claire Burton, the Organisational Development & Performance Manager then provided more detail.

It was explained that the world of work had changed considerably over the last 2 years and the Council, as an organisation, needed to ensure that it was flexible, continued to evolve and was fit for purpose and to develop its culture to make Breckland Council a great place to work. Five key themes had been identified (see section 2.1 of the report) and under each of these themes four areas had been set out to concentrate on supported by an Action Plan detailing these activities and timescales. Members attention was drawn to 'Our People Promise' within the Strategy which outlined employees' expectations about when, where and how their work had changed. Breckland wanted to be an organisation that people aspired to work for, and the 'People Promise' described what it was like to be part of Breckland Council, and this would be used as part of recruitment campaigns to attract candidates.

Apart from a few minor spelling mistakes, Councillor Monument felt that the Strategy read very well.

Councillor Birt felt that the recommendation should have included the words Organisational Development in full rather than being abbreviated. He appreciated that organisational development was wider than continued professional development (CPD) but nevertheless he felt that CPD should be a key component and queried where the Council was in respect of this matter in terms of budget, what training was available and who would perform that training and what proportion of staff was using CPD or had used it in the last year for specific individual needs.

The Chairman reminded Members that all employment of staff and staff training came under the Chief Executive. Members could take an interest but could not pass judgement on it.

The Organisational Development & Performance Manager explained that there was an annual training budget of around £72k as well as a training plan that was set each year based on employee needs. This particular year two training programmes had taken place, one for senior leadership team and one for the senior management team and all these learnings and themes stemming from these were now being progressed down to all staff members. Any training that staff felt they needed for their roles the Council would try to accommodate.

Referring to page 27 of the Agenda pack, Councillor Birt had noted the details in respect of measuring outcomes, and pointed out that the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (O&SC) received information of days lost as a result of sickness from full time employees and it seemed to him that this was related to the KPI within the Performance report that O&SC considered; however, such measures had not been included in the list of parameters in this report. He pointed out that O&SC also used to receive a KPI called staff turnover, but this KPI had been dropped for some unknown reason. He remembered that this was last reported in Quarter 2 in 2021/22 and the target that had been set back then was 4.3%, the new target listed in this report was much lower at 1.5% which he felt was quite a difference and asked if this figure was being met. He also asked how these 8 measures were going to be reported to Members.

The Organisational Development & Performance Manager felt that Councillor Birt had raised a fair point in respect of the KPI for sickness and it would not be unreasonable to include such a measure in this document. As far as staff turnover was concerned, this was an HR performance indicator (PI) and she understood that such information was not provided to Members as it was not a KPI and was monitored by the HR Team. The measure that had been included in this report was the turnover of 1.5% per month and was reviewed by the HR team regularly to ensure that the Council was at a national target and was reflective of the national figure for staff turnover.

In terms of reporting such measures, there would be an internal reporting process whereby Councillor James would be checking progress but would not be reported to Members unless it was a KPI.

Councillor Hambidge asked what the employee headcount was.

Members were informed that it was around 270 not including the Anglia Revenues Partnership staff.

Councillor Birt referred to a staff survey being used and asked how the Council ensured that this was anonymous and if it was not, were there opportunities for staff to provide anonymous feedback and how would this information be collated.

Members were informed that it was all anonymous and the feedback was gathered using various communication channels.

Councillor Bambridge mentioned the staff training. He himself had been a member of this Council for nearly 20 years and had been extremely heartened by the training available for both staff and Members whereby many staff that he knew of had worked their way up in the Council and had remained.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED that the Organisational Development & People Strategy (2022-2025) be approved.

38/22 MEMBER INDUCTION 2023 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Councillor James, the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services was delighted to introduce this report to Members.

Sarah Barsby, the Assistant Director for People & Governance and Teresa Smith, the Democratic Services Team Leader then presented the report and provided Members with a presentation (attached).

The Assistant Director for People & Governance stated that the presentation drew out the key themes within the report.

As part of next year's district election, Breckland Council would like the welcome that Members received to be more reflective of the organisation as it was currently; modern, agile, people and community focussed, committed to learning and improving (through training and support). Along with support from the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Jane James and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, Councillor Lynda Turner, there was a shared ambition for all Elected

members, regardless of their experience, to feel supported and confident in carrying out their role for the benefit of their community, and the district as a whole.

The Democratic Services Team Leader then explained the proposed Member Induction Plan that would cover three key election milestones:

- **Pre-election** – promotional prospective candidate
- **Formally elected** – the day of the Election, pre-induction Breckland Council welcome pack
- **Post election**, covering:
Member Induction, and
Member Training (the first three months)

It had been suggested that the prospective Councillor event this year, in order to attract as wide a pool of prospective candidates as possible, Officers were proposing to promote the well-established information sessions provided by Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC). This would avoid duplication of effort and enable the team to focus on launching an awareness campaign.

The PR campaign, the Council's Awareness Campaign, would be featured on its social and digital channels, including the Breckland Council website, signposting to relevant and useful resources, such as those offered by NALC and the Local Government Association, for those considering becoming a councillor.

The pre-induction Breckland Council welcome pack would be more aligned with the staff induction experience, and it was proposed that the pack would consist of a link to a welcome video from the Chief Executive, a notebook, pen, a Breckland Cares key ring a lanyard (in preparation for their ID card) and postcards with QR codes directing Members to various elements on the Breckland Council website to support them in their first days. These could include links to the Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest forms.

The Member Induction itself, as soon as practicably possible after the Election, Members, newly Elected Members and/or existing Members, would be invited to attend a 'Welcome to Breckland' session at Elizabeth House, at a date to be agreed. This session, based on feedback, would be shorter than in previous years and would concentrate on the 'Place' by having market stalls from different service areas to provide information on the services that Breckland provided, the Council itself on what it was and what it did in its place in the 3-tier Local Government system, how the Council worked, the #teambreckland, including working smarter, the Corporate Plan & its priorities and achievements. During this session, there would be an opportunity for Members to collect their new ID badges, and so not to overload Members with too much information on one day, there would then be a separate follow up session that would cover day to day essentials such as governance, members allowances, Code of Conduct and how to access agendas and minutes.

During the first 3 months, there would be a plan in place for a number of face-to-face training sessions that would be offered to Members covering the core basics of Breckland. These sessions would be recorded for the benefit of those Members unable to attend and for future reference throughout Members' tenure. Examples of these sessions were highlighted (see section 1.6 of the report).

In terms of Members ongoing planning and development following the initial 3-

month period, the Assistant Director for People & Governance explained that some key learning resources would be developed for all members making as many of these planning and development sessions available 24/7 to suit members who had other commitments including work. This would include developing a training library on the Members' intranet that would provide copies of training sessions and links to legislation and 'How to Guides'. Additionally, 'e' learning which would include links to the LGA website including a link to the new Councillor Hub provided by the LGA.

Two other options for Members to consider was a mentoring scheme where existing Members could get involved in offering mentoring to new Councillors (see section 1.7.1 of the report) as well as a training needs assessment questionnaire to ensure that ongoing training and development needs were being suitably met. This had not been put together yet, but it was proposed that when new Members had the chance to settle in this questionnaire would be circulated and dependent on feedback, an ongoing training programme would be developed for the remainder of their term. Appendix A of the report included the questions that were proposed to be included.

In terms of the next steps, Members were then asked to provide feedback on this proposed approach, and subject to feedback, a Working Group would be set up where various support services would be brought in, to ensure that this Induction Programme was up and running in time. It was also proposed that a further report be brought back to this Committee in the New Year to discuss progress and whether all these plans were on track.

Councillor Hambidge had been a member who was elected mid-term and had not been privy to such an induction and he felt that it would have been helpful to have a sheet of paper that signposted Members where to go and who to contact for a specific problem.

The Assistant Director for People & Governance said she was very mindful of this and one of the subjects that had been discussed was to develop a Microsoft Teams chat therefore, for new Members in particular, if they had a question and did not know who to contact, could then ask a question in that forum which would hopefully be answered.

This could be set up just as a Member Group, as a safe space to support each other, and it could be arranged for the Democratic Services Team to have access to that group as well to ensure that such questions were being responded to effectively. A separate group would also be set up which would be owned and managed by Democratic Services and as Members were already aware there was always someone from the Team seated at the concierge desk in Elizabeth House 5 days a week.

Councillor Duigan said that such a contact list was available for Norfolk County Council Members.

Councillor Monument stated that Members had not really been using Teams or Zoom all that long but she had been fortunate, as a retired person, had the time and the help from younger family members, to be able to get to grips with these video platforms, but some new Councillors might not have any idea of how to use these and therefore felt that this needed to be high up on the agenda for training needs.

Referring to the previous induction sessions, Councillor Dowling, as a councillor elected in 2019, had found those initial meetings very useful. She picked up on the point that Councillor Hambidge had raised and for all those who had been elected mid-term and that big chunk that was missed due to Covid, had been difficult for many trying to keep in touch and finding out what was going on and as Councillor Monument mentioned with Zoom and Teams, there had been many time where she had difficulty trying to log on without success but she was confident that such glitches would be sorted going forward.

The Chairman said that this would be where the suggestion of mentoring would be very useful.

Councillor Birt raised two points. Firstly, the report mentioned the association with NALC and the claim was to get a wider pool of candidates but he was slightly sceptical about this but agreed about not duplicating work but felt that the Council would be addressing a fairly narrow pool of potential candidates and perhaps needed to look wider for people not associated with NALC and felt that schools should be involved or clubs and societies in the local area or even providing information to village halls.

Councillor James apologised if this information had not been conveyed properly, the Council was looking to utilise NALC for what they were already doing but the Council's own communication methods would also be used. It would be a multichannel process.

Councillor Birt referred to page 32 of the agenda pack in respect of carbon footprint, he realised that this Council had a very long way to go but was pleased to see this mentioned in the report that the Democratic Services Team Leader had included and should be considered as Teams/Zoom was not carbon neutral but were carbon intensive.

The Chairman said that all concerns would be noted.

For reassurance, the Chairman mentioned the on-going IT briefing sessions for current Members, herself, Councillor Bambridge and Councillor James had attended one of these sessions with Officers where a very good lesson on Teams had been very helpful.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED that the suggested ideas to allow Officers to begin preparations of the Member Induction Programme for delivery in May 2023 be approved.

39/22 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Chairman pointed out that an additional meeting had been requested to be held on Thursday, 12 January 2023 at 10am in the Anglia Room. She hoped that all Members could attend but to contact their substitutes if they could not.

40/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 11)

This item was not required.

Action
By

41/22 RESTRICTED MINUTES: 13 JULY 2022 (AGENDA ITEM 12)

Noted.

The meeting closed at 10.45 am

CHAIRMAN