

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

**Held on Thursday, 8 December 2022 at 10.00 am in the
The Breckland Conference Centre, Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,
Dereham, NR19 1EE**

PRESENT

Cllr Peter Wilkinson (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Robert Hambidge
Cllr Roy Brame	Cllr Chris Harvey
Cllr Tristan Ashby	Cllr Paul Hewett
Cllr Stephen Askew	Cllr Jane James
Cllr Roger Atterwill	Cllr Terry Jermy
Cllr Gordon Bambridge	Cllr Tina Kiddell
Cllr Timothy Birt	Cllr Robert Kybird
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cllr Terry Land
Cllr Claire Bowes	Cllr Keith Martin
Cllr Mike Brindle	Cllr Linda Monument
Cllr Marion Chapman-Allen	Cllr Philip Morton
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Cllr William Nunn
Cllr Harry Clarke	Cllr Paul Plummer
Cllr Paul Claussen	Cllr Ian Sherwood
Cllr Philip Cowen	Cllr Sarah Suggitt
Cllr Helen Crane	Cllr Taila Taylor
Cllr Vera Dale	Cllr Lynda Turner
Cllr Richard Duffield	Cllr Alison Webb
Cllr Phillip Duigan	Cllr David Wickerson
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cllr Nigel Wilkin
Cllr Kay Grey	

In Attendance

Maxine O'Mahony	- Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Sarah Wolstenholme-Smy	- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader

Vice-Chairman in the Chair

Councillor Wilkinson, the Vice-Chairman of the Council, in the Chair.

114/22 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Bushell, Colman, Dowling, Gilbert, Kiddle-Morris, Nairn, Oliver and Terry.

115/22 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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116/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Councillor Cowen declared an interest under Agenda Item 9(a) Cabinet Minute No. 95/22- Breckland Local Plan Partial Update, as he operated an architectural practice.

117/22 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

On behalf of the Chairman of the Council, the Vice-Chairman made the following announcements:

Thelma Paines

Former Councillor, Thelma Paines, had sadly passed away in October. As well as being a Thetford Town Councillor, she was also a Breckland Councillor for Thetford, and Chairman of Breckland Council during 1997-1998.

A minute's silence was then held.

Staff Event

The fantastic work that went into arranging the raffle for the Staff Event on the 30 November was highlighted. The prizes had all been donated, and the amount of £644.50 raised for the Chairman's chosen charities on the evening had been overwhelming. Nigel Steggles and Jordan White were congratulated for their sterling work in arranging the raffle and the Chairman's personal thanks were conveyed to both.

118/22 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The Leader made the following announcements:

The winter period was now upon us, many would be looking forward to Christmas and spending time with families and friends, but it was important to remember that the colder times would bring its own challenges for a number of Breckland residents. The Leader took this opportunity to share with everyone just some of the ways this Council was helping Breckland residents at this time.

Warm homes

Firstly, as Breckland Council was a member of the Norfolk Warm Homes partnership, residents in the district could access a £3.8m funding pot to help improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

This included help with paying for wall and loft insulation as well as renewable air source heat pumps and more. This support was helping low-income households across Breckland – and Norfolk – to reduce their energy bills, as well as their carbon footprint.

He was pleased to inform Members that as a direct result of this Council's campaign to raise awareness of such support, including writing directly to around 2,500 residents, believed to be eligible for such support, as well as including information about it in the latest Breckland residents' magazine, a record number of applications had been received. Approximately, 75% of applications in November were directly as a result of the promotion.

Now that December was here, the partnership would no longer be taking

applications for external wall insulation due to the temperature condition requirements for installation, but applications would continue to be accepted for other types of support.

The Leader urged all Members – and anybody watching at home – to check the details, eligibility criteria and support available at the <https://norfolkwarmhomes.org.uk/> website.

Daisy Programme support

The Christmas and New Year period could bring heightened anxiety for those experiencing domestic abuse and through the Council's £1m Inspiring Communities programme, it continued to support some of Breckland's most vulnerable residents.

Sadly, around 6,000 people in the district were estimated to be victims of domestic abuse each year but many cases went unreported. In the latest report from the Daisy Programme – the Council's charity partner, which helped people recover from domestic abuse – thanks to funding and the partnership, in the last year the Daisy Programme had supported more than 1,000 Breckland residents and their families to be safe, achieve better well-being and move on with confidence.

The partnership had helped nearly 100 children and young people to achieve a better start to their lives and understanding had been increased and awareness of domestic abuse within Breckland communities, encouraging more people to come forward to access help.

This support was still growing, and the Daisy Programme had also trained more than 200 professionals in Breckland, including Breckland Council officers, to provide further support to people affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

Business support

December was a particularly important time for local businesses, and residents were encouraged to make the most of the fantastic independent traders up and down the district whilst doing their Christmas shopping. Every pound spent within locally owned shops was a pound circulating within the local economy and benefiting the local community.

To help highlight some of the wonderful shops in Breckland's towns and villages, there was a competition running and people were invited to nominate the best, brightest and jolliest shop window in the district.

Those that nominated could win a hamper and would also help raise the profile of local shops by celebrating the very best window displays and customer service in Breckland. More details could be found on the Breckland website and on its social media page.

A new grant scheme was underway, to help breathe new life into the high streets and support them to thrive as 2023 drew nearer.

The 'Meanwhile' Grant Scheme aimed to provide fledgling businesses a 'leg-up' into current vacant shops by offering up to six months' free rent, support with set-up costs such as shelving and tills, and up to £10,000 in financial support to help them get established on Breckland's high streets.

Districts deliver

Finally, a reminder that as a District Council, Breckland's services would play a crucial role through the Christmas and New Year period.

Just like any other time of the year, the Licensing team would be out and about inspecting food premises to make sure they were safe and hygienic ahead of people's Christmas meals out. Every year the team carried out more than 600 food safety inspections and these would continue to be carried out throughout December.

Breckland Council had worked hard to stamp out fly tipping in the district and officers would continue this campaign by keeping a presence in the community over the festive period and into the New Year. Fly tipping was perpetrated by a small minority of people, ruining the environment and the district for the rest of the population. The Leader made it absolutely clear – fly tipping would not be tolerated, it would be investigated, and perpetrators would be pursued, landing them with a big fine or even a day in court.

As for some of the Council's more vulnerable residents, the housing team were on standby to help anybody who was homeless in the district, particularly if the weather turned colder. Through the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during periods of particularly cold or wet weather, anybody sleeping rough would be offered access to emergency accommodation if they needed it. Councillors or members of the public could let the Council know about somebody needing assistance by getting in touch by calling the office or via <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

Breckland Council are here to support residents, and that support extended to animals too. The Council's Animal Welfare officer carried out regular inspections of pet shops, animal breeders, kennels and catteries and even zoos to make sure the animals were being kept humanely and safely. A pet was for life, not just for Christmas – so if any residents watching this meeting were thinking of getting a new family pet this Christmas, the Leader urged them to make sure that they were able to provide a loving home in the long-term and only used reputable and licensed breeders and pet shops.

Refuse crews would be collecting all the rubbish after the festivities were over. In the UK more than 200,000 miles of wrapping paper was thrown away each year and obviously, as much as possible would be recycled. Advice about which Christmas items could be recycled was available on the Council's website. Not everything could be, for instance, laminated paper or paper covered with foil or glitter generally could not be recycled but if people were unsure the best way to check was to scrunch the paper into a ball and if it stayed scrunched, it could most probably be recycled, but if it sprung back, it definitely could not be due to the plastic coating.

Breckland Council remained on hand to support its residents through December and into 2023 and highlighted once again that district councils delivered.

Finally, the Leader closed his announcements by taking the opportunity to wish all Members and residents watching at home, a very Merry Christmas.

119/22 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The questions on notice including the responses had been published prior to the meeting. No further questions could be asked under this item.

120/22 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Given this was a Conservative led Government and Conservative led County Council, Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group, was sure that the Leader had been fully briefed on the Devolution Deal and asked him if he could provide more details.

The Leader was aware through the press and media that the Secretary of State was paying a visit to Norfolk County Council to sign a Devolution Deal offer but as a District Councillor and a Council Leader he had not been privy to what was being included. He was sure that in time the information would be shared with him and in turn the information would then be shared with Members of this Council. He had been encouraged by the work of the Conservative Government in respect of the Levelling-Up Agenda and what it was striving to achieve around the twelve themes, and the monies it would be pumping into towns and high streets, and he hoped that the deal that was being negotiated with Norfolk County Council would be positive and would be supporting residents and businesses across the County.

Councillor Atterwill, the Leader of the Independent Group was aware of the recent statement by the Government where it was announced that housing targets for District Councils were going to be scrapped and asked Councillor Suggitt, the Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning how this would affect Breckland's Local Plan review and if it was going to be paused or the direction changed.

The Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning did not know the exact details, but the Local Plan process would not be halted and would continue to be reviewed. Much of the information that had been released had been quite positive as it would put more emphasis on local matters and therefore the work would continue and would not be aborted.

The Leader stated that as part of the written statement received from the Secretary of State to Westminster on 6 December, it laid out some of the aspirations of what he wanted to achieve through the Levelling-Up Bill and part of that included a consultation process. As Councillor Suggitt stated, a great deal of the information presented had been very positive, and he knew that this District Council had been lobbying hard through the District Council's Network (DCN) to get many of those changes' forthcoming, but he was not going to get excited and start to chalk this up as a success until he saw this within the Bill. The challenge for Breckland Council, was to ensure that it was using the knowledge as Members to ensure that through the consultation process that the responses were robust, and the proof would be in the Bill. No abortive work would be undertaken, and all Members would be kept regularly informed.

Councillor Atterwill thanked the Leader and the Executive Member for their answers but was disappointed that district councils were being kept in the dark.

Councillor Birt felt that over the years central government had been besieged by lies and did not want to see this filtered down to local government and asked the Leader for the definition of a lie.

The Leader informed Councillor Birt that if he had any concerns about the conduct of Members or Officers there was a clear complaint process in place.

Councillor Turner asked Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Health &

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Communities a question concerning community hotspots and wanted to know if there was going to be another round of funding applications.

In response, the Executive Member for Health & Communities was pleased to report that there was already a further round of funding, but the closing date was the 12 December 2022. She urged any organisation who wished to apply to do so now, all information could be found on the Norfolk Community Foundation website. In the first round, the Norfolk Community Foundation had been inundated with over 150 applications and feedback had been received from many residents who were now enjoying the community hubs warm spaces and making new friends.

Councillor Wickerson asked if the Leader, the Chairman and all Councillors would join him in congratulating Swaffham market as being listed in the Daily Telegraph as one of, the 10 greatest market towns in the UK. He hoped that such an inclusion would bring more visitors to Swaffham and the surrounding Breckland area to the benefit of the district as a whole. All wholeheartedly agreed. The Chairman said that he would like to see all market towns working together as all had the support from Breckland Council. The Leader had been delighted for the market town of Swaffham and all of the traders. The newspaper had talked about all the independent shops and the auctions that took place as well as all the activities held throughout the year and he was pleased that Breckland Council had been able to work in partnership with the County Council and the Town Council, the market traders and the businesses in lifting the town's profile alongside the Market Town's Initiative and the Heritage Action Zone and he hoped that there would be many more market towns in Breckland receive the praise and recognition they deserved in 2023.

Councillor Borrett asked the Executive Member for Health & Communities if it was correct that Breckland Council was looking to recruit a number of FSA qualified debt advisors, given the difficult economic situation that many people were finding themselves in.

The Executive Member for Health & Communities Members said that this was true, it had been recognised that organisations such as the Norfolk Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) needed some extra help, and this had been taken on board and it had been agreed to recruit two qualified debt advisors funded by Breckland Council and working in and out of the Council's offices alongside the CAB.

Councillor Morton mentioned the plans for the leisure facility in Attleborough and asked Councillor Crane, the Executive Member for Environmental Health, Licensing & Sustainability why the plans did not suggest that it should be challenged to design a net zero carbon building. He felt that the design and professional fees ought to cover that but whilst the Council did not own the building but was underwriting £2.6m of the costs an example should be set in respect of carbon emissions, and he asked the Executive Member if she could confirm that the feasibility report on sustainability options would be brought to Members for final approval.

Councillor Webb responded on behalf of Councillor Crane. The Executive Member for Housing & Communities said that Members had been made aware of the need for sustainability and this had been recognised and she asked Councillor Morton to be patient as the report would be coming forward that would include the sustainable measures and the financial aspects that would have to be considered.

Councillor Grey asked the Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning what was next with the Local Plan.

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Members were informed that the partial update that had been agreed at the previous Cabinet meeting had been submitted and was now in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate, and Members would be kept informed of the Hearing date. A Member Briefing had been held on the Issues & Options paper and had been well attended, and Officers were now working to make it more user friendly to allow for better participation from residents and communities and that a report would be presented to the Cabinet meeting in January, and if approved, would go out to consultation between January and April. These were the current key headlines along with other work that was on-going and the next all Member Briefing would be held on 7 Feb 2023.

Councillor Land directed his question to Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Property, Projects & Procurement. He had noticed that there were several sites within the Breckland Bridge redevelopment within his Boudica Ward and asked what proposals were in place for consultation with residents.

The Executive Member for Property, Projects & Procurement said that an email had been sent to all Members about the small sites workstream that set out the exact process that would be followed going forward and would be more than happy to receive questions from Councillor Land on this matter. The Chairman said that he had seen the email and was very pleased with the process in place as it had been very informative.

Councillor Hambidge asked the Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning, if she had any details to share in respect of the extension to the call for sites.

Members were informed that the call for sites extension ended on 1 December. Prior to that the Council received 298 sites for residential development and 68 for growth areas, these had already been included on the Commonplace website. Due to the extension, 85 additional sites had come forward across 34 different parishes and 14 for growth areas, and the plan at the moment, was to consolidate these and uploaded on the commonplace website before Christmas. It was important to stress that these sites were still classed as raw data and no decisions have been made.

Councillor Clarke asked the Leader if he could use his influence, to ensure that this part of the agenda as far as possible lived up to the spirit of the Constitution as the clue was in the title, 'Without Notice'.

The Leader felt that over the course of the many constitutional changes, questions with and without notice had not been exercised to its full extent but now believed that this was a suitable space to ask questions to any Cabinet Members who would provide fulsome responses if they could and as far as he was concerned, the rules of Standing Order No. 7 were being followed.

The Chairman reminded Members that if a written response was required, this would be sent within 5 days.

Councillor Brame asked the Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning to explain in more detail, the recent statement made by Michael Gove MP about the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill, to put local communities at the heart of the planning system and asked what affect this would have on this Council.

Members were informed that there was a great deal of information that was still

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unknown which was frustrating but what this Council was aware of was that there would be mandatory design codes brought in that would have the same weight in the Local Plan and would help guide the development that communities would like to see and would be more reflective of the Breckland area. This was a piece of work which was already on-going, and would be going out for consultation in the next few months there will also be some workshops which again would be a chance for all Members, residents and communities to get involved; and could be influenced by local knowledge and needs. Other information included in the statement that Councillor Atterwill had alluded to was around an obligation to end the 5-year housing land supply, if Councils had an updated Plan. This would allow local authorities to work with local communities, to determine what could be built having regard to constraints in respect of the character of the area, a consultation in respect of the 20% buffer and rewards for local authorities for over delivery. The duty to Co-operate would be ending, Council Tax measures on empty homes would also be considered; not forgetting that many of these matters would come into effect after various consultations, and this Council would be taking part in as many of these consultations as possible to ensure that local communities thoughts and needs were reflected and some positivity came out of these changes to reflect the Council's aspirations and its residents in the District.

Councillor Brindle raised some concerns about the Abbey Estate in Thetford. This was a huge estate for which Flagship had developed a proposal to add 100s of houses, to knock down some houses and commence some large-scale redevelopment. The community now felt as if they were under attack, this was a 50-year old established community and asked if Members could be assured that Breckland Council would fully consult with Members before providing support or money, or land to assist with the latest version of the scheme.

The Leader advised that Flagship had been open & transparent around the process from start to finish, regarding the engagement that had been undertaking concerning the designs and the options papers have been reviewed in relation to what was taking place, he believed that Flagship would not do anything without the support from the local community. Flagship had acknowledged that tenants were living in inadequate homes due to the design, quality and build of those properties and they wanted these properties to be brought up to the right specification. There was an option for Flagship to work with the community and other partners such as Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council to see what can be done to regenerate or improve the housing for those residents on the Abbey Estate. No decision had been made by this Council, and if it reached the planning stage, it would have to go through due process through the Planning Committee to make an informed decision. In relation to any financial support that may possibly be required, this was unknown, as no final formal offer had been received. This Council was happy to work in partnership with anyone, and as some of the land in question was in Breckland's ownership, again this would be a decision when appropriate to do so.

Cllr Brindle thanked the Leader for his response but reminded Members that the Executive Member for Strategic & Operational Planning had previously stated that local communities were at the heart of the community, and he hoped that this re-development would not go ahead.

Councillor Jermy asked the Leader to clarify the difference between a directly elected Leader and a directly elected Mayor.

The Leader explained that a directly elected Leader and a directly elected Mayor was something completely new and had never been seen before. For example, a

directly elected Leader for Norfolk & Suffolk would be using a County Council to deliver those continued services that the County already did, and other bodies may or may not be subsumed in that, for example Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to deliver some of those provisions. A directly elected Mayor, would be a combined authority who dealt with functions delegated from Government around education, infrastructure growth and health and would work in partnership with other parts of local government which would form a committee and/or a Board to support them in delivering for its residents and businesses. There were two very clear differences in what the models were, and Norfolk as he understood it, was going for a directly elected Leader. This was his interpretation in what he had read through the Levelling-Up Bill and during conversations with colleagues and would wait for the detail of that Bill to come forward.

121/22 MOTION RECEIVED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor Land was given the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind his Notice of Motion.

Councillor Land stated that post pandemic, the NHS was under intolerable stress. It was estimated that there were over 100,000 vacancies for care workers across the country with the figure constantly rising. This was what was causing all the waiting times by ambulances outside hospitals as beds were unavailable. Therefore, this Motion, which would relieve pressure on the care system was a win, win.

Councillor Land then spoke about his parents who were both in ill health and the issues they had with trying to get help from occupational health, thankfully, this had been sorted, but if that help had not been available they would have had two choices, help at home that was not always available or be moved into a care home which was not an option for either of them. By approving this Motion, it would help the NHS in the short term and save many 1000s of pounds in social care costs.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Morton.

Councillor Birt fully supported this Motion as it was crucial that this Council did something. Data now showed that the stress in respect of these matters within the district was on the increase and this was one way that this Council could help and would be a perfect use of council money.

Councillor Jermy said that he had been involved a great deal with the health service over the last few weeks and he had found it very interesting in talking to various carers and NHS staff and the stresses that they were under. Bed hopping was causing many issues and disabled adaptations could help. But what had been less clear was the impact this was having on peoples' mental health. The adaptations that his father had been lucky enough to receive had made him much more independent due to some simple adaptations and had promoted his independence. He was aware that Breckland Council could not solve the problems in the NHS or the social care system, but it did have a role in respect of these disabled facility grants and how these were spent and to top these funds up between now and April and he was pleased to support this Motion.

Councillor Turner referred to her Question on Notice and the response received that explained the work that this Council was already doing.

Councillor Atterwill fully supported this Motion and had taken great interest in the Question on Notice and the response received. The response that Councillor Bambridge, the Executive Member for Housing & Homelessness had provided was

welcomed but as a Council it could look into the range of services that it provided. It had the means to provide the extra funding and allow the Team to sift through the applications as quickly as possible and he urged all Members to get behind this to allow people to retain their dignity and remain in their own home.

The Executive Member for Housing & Homelessness thanked Councillor Land for his Motion, he felt for his family and others alike who were suffering in the district and was pleased to hear that his family had received some help. Breckland Council was already doing many things to help, and the way it allocated its grants were being copied by other councils. This authority was lobbying for more funding and had already been in contact with the Secretary of State about further funding. There was a central government budget shortfall of £1.75m but more funding was required to tackle the grants that had already been assessed.

The Leader absolutely respected and supported the premise of the Motion and Breckland Council had already raised the profile with MPs and the Secretary of State. It would be impossible to tackle the 750 figures on the adaptation waiting list quoted in the Motion by Councillor Land by April 2023; however, he was pleased to report that the Handyperson scheme was working well and with this more people could be discharged from hospital much quicker by enabling small adaptations and allowing more people to move back into their homes. This was already on the top of the Council's priority list.

Councillor Atterwill thanked everyone for their comments but the additional funding from the Inclusive Growth Reserve could become available immediately, he wanted to know if suitable plans had been drawn up and how soon could this Council mobilise trade people to get the work done as soon as possible. He also asked if the Council was aware of any particularly acute cases that it could put some of the monies towards as he was not sure how soon the Government monies would come forward.

The Executive Member for Housing & Homelessness said there were a number of acute cases in Breckland and the £82k for the Handyperson service mentioned in the response was immediately available and would solve a lot of problems for many people. He did not know when the Government funding would be coming through but, in the meantime, he believed that 170 cases had been fully assessed and had been fully quoted so the work could commence. He pointed out that the Council was now using 7 contractors rather than one and so the works were being dealt with swiftly.

Councillor Borrett congratulated Breckland for its innovative ways in dealing with grant monies and was pleased to hear that this authority was now assessing far more people than any other council. Breckland's disabled facilities grants were essential and agreed with the Opposition as the thinking was exactly the same as the ruling Group; however, he could not support the Motion as the money had already been submitted and the Motion was therefore redundant.

As a member of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital NHS Trust, the Chairman pointed out that the NHS really appreciated the handyperson service.

Councillor Morton was pleased to learn of the actions being taken by the Portfolio Holder and the Housing Team as he also had a parent in their 90s who had benefited from such a grant but to have an increase to the backlog of claimants put out the wrong message and therefore supported the Motion.

Councillor Land moved the Motion, and following a request which was supported, a

recorded vote was taken.

The Motion was lost by 30 votes against and 8 votes in favour – there were no abstentions.

122/22 MINUTES (FOR INFORMATION ONLY) (AGENDA ITEM 9)

122 .a Cabinet: 21 November 2022

Councillor Birt asked why there had not been any livestreaming and recording of the meeting carried out when the Cabinet met at Swaffham Town Council. The Chairman stated that the question was not relevant for this meeting.

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21 November 2022 were noted.

122 .b Overview & Scrutiny Commission: 20 October 2022

Referring to Minute No. 79/22, Councillor Birt said that he had asked for a copy of the Serco contract and had submitted a FOI request to release section 2 of the Serco contract, but this had not been forthcoming and felt that this document would have been very useful for the Task & Finish Group.

The Chairman stated that the Minutes were for any errors within the Minutes and not for questions.

The Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 20 October 2022 were noted.

122 .c Governance and Audit Committee: 29 September 2022

The Minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee meeting held on 29 September 2022 were noted.

122 .d Planning Committee: 4 October 2022

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 4 October 2022 were noted.

122 .e Planning Committee: 1 November 2022

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 1 November 2022 were noted.

122 .f Committee of the Licensing Authority: 19 October 2022

The Minutes of the Committee of the Licensing Authority meeting held on 19 October 2022 were noted.

122 .g Licensing Committee: 19 October 2022

The Minutes of the Licensing Authority meeting held on 19 October 2022 were noted.

123/22 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Rory Ringer, the Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report.

The report recommended the appointment of an Independent Remuneration Panel for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026.

The names of the three suitable candidates were highlighted.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor James, the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services and was seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Claussen.

Councillor Jermy felt disappointed that only 3 individuals in total had come forward and all were male, and all had served on the Panel before. He found it difficult to believe that not one more person in Breckland had expressed an interest and felt that either the advert had not worked or there was not a single person in Breckland other than these 3 who had expressed an interest. He was disappointed that Members were being asked to appoint a Panel for a 4-year term without any new opinions or ideas coming forward which the Council would receive by having new individuals and having a Panel that consisted of entirely male members was unfair as, in his opinion, gender balance was critical. He then proposed an amendment to the recommendation which was to appoint the Panel in its current form, but to re-advertise to try and attract new members specifically female members to join the Panel.

The Leader thanked Councillor Jermy for his remarks. He was certain that Councillor Jermy did not mean that when Councillors were re-elected for a 4-year term, they did not bring along any new thinking and by re-appointing individuals to the IRP for a 4-year period were not by any means different to Councillors. The process was the process, and acknowledged that representation was immensely important, and it would be inappropriate to defer this for any longer as this was a statutory requirement and the appointments needed to be established so that the Panel could undertake this work ahead of the Elections in 2023.

In response, Councillor Jermy said that he was not clear on the urgency, as the existing scheme existed until May 2023. He drew attention to section 3.1 of the report where it stated: 'to enable appropriate appointments to be made ahead of the next meeting of the IRP in early 2023'. In his opinion, there was still plenty of time to re-advertise and hopefully recruit some new people and enable an IRP meeting to go ahead between now and May 2023.

The Leader stated that, these individuals had come forward and he respected and applauded them for willing to support local democracy and local councils. There was other business to undertake, and it was not his place as an Elected Member to lead or influence the Democratic Services Manager or the Monitoring Officer as they had felt it to be appropriate to bring this report forward for work to be undertaken early in 2023. He acknowledged Councillor Jermy's concerns but was unsure if anyone else would apply if it went out for recruitment again. He looked forward to working with Councillor Jermy post 2023 if both successful in the Elections to make sure that when the next Panel was recruited, that they could work together and promote the advertisement so that anyone else who might be interested could apply.

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Councillor Atterwill asked where the advert had been advertised as he had not seen it and had not, as an Elected Member, been made aware of the advertisement. If he had been made aware, it could have been shared more widely to encourage a much wider group of candidates to come forward. He was concerned that this had been a very limited advertising process and although he had nothing against these individuals, as he was sure they were very good, but felt that the membership of the Panel should be rotated.

The Leader stated that all advertisements went through the normal HR process, and acknowledged Councillor Atterwill's concerns, but the advert had been placed on the Breckland recruitment page and the business of this Council was to accept or reject the recommendation.

Councillor Atterwill said that he was not casting aspersions on the 3 successful applicants but in future he asked the Officers to let Members know where and when this advert would be advertised as it could be something that Members could help with going forward.

Councillor Jermy then proposed and read aloud his amendment to the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Clarke: To accept the appointment of these 3 individuals but to re-advertise to seek additional Panel Members.

The Leader said that he was content with the recommendation as now presented by Councillor Jermy - that this Council would seek further members to the Panel but not stop the appointment of the current candidates but to go out for further recruitment to appoint further members if they were forthcoming. The Leader thanked Councillor Jermy for his forbearance.

If this amended recommendation was approved, Councillor Monument asked for it to be made quite clear to the 3 members that had been appointed that this Council did have confidence in them and if readvertised, to limit the numbers to no more than 3. A maximum of 6 in total on the Panel.

Councillor Atterwill felt that if the Council did readvertise and more candidates came forward it would make sense to have 5 members on the Panel for voting purposes but felt that it would be more appropriate to discuss numbers outside of this meeting. He supported the amendment proposed, to advertise the role again to try and get the best people for the job no matter their gender.

The Leader stated that he wanted to propose an amendment to Councillor Jermy's proposed amendment. In accordance with the Constitution, this was not allowed as the amendment proposed by Councillor Jermy that had been seconded by Councillor Clarke had to be voted upon first. Subsequently, the Leader stated that he could not support the amendment.

Councillor Jermy was asked to repeat his amendment to the recommendation – to accept the recommendation as stated in the report but to add an amendment to further advertise to recruit additional members up to a maximum of 6.

For clarity, Councillor Jermy's amendment was confirmed – to accept the appointment of the 3 individuals but to readvertise and seek further members to the Panel.

A vote was then taken and the amendment to the recommendation was lost by 8 votes in favour and 30 against + 1 abstention.

The Leader proposed a further amendment to the recommendation as follows:

1. that the Independent Remuneration Panel be re-established for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026, comprising the individuals as listed in the report - to be confirmed immediately.
2. to readvertise again until 1 February 2023; and
3. a maximum of 2 additional individuals be sought if further individuals were forthcoming:

Councillor Jermy seconded the above proposal.

A vote was then taken which was carried - 36 votes in favour + 1 abstention, and it was:

RESOLVED that:

1. the Independent Remuneration Panel be re-established for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026, comprising the individuals as listed in the report - to be confirmed immediately.
2. to readvertise again until 1 February 2023; and
3. a maximum of 2 individuals be sought if further individuals were forthcoming:

At this point, Councillor Birt drew attention to Standing Order 5.1(k) of the Constitution, the Order of Business, and reminded Members that he had not been allowed to raise questions under agenda item 9 and quoted the Standing Order. He stated that he had raised this matter many times and had previously been informed that Members were allowed to ask questions under the Minutes.

The Chairman indicated that the question Councillor Birt had tried to raise earlier was not about the accuracy of the Minutes.

124/22 POLITICAL GROUP REGULATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report that asked Members to confirm, in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, the Political Balance of the Council's Committees.

Following recent changes to political group numbers it was now appropriate to review the Council's political balance on Committee seats. The allocations had been highlighted on pages 77 to 78 of the agenda pack.

The recommendation as listed in the report was proposed by Councillor James, the Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Claussen.

Councillor Morton asked how the numbers were allocated to each committee was determined, particularly in respect of Licensing Committee that had more Members than others.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that the Licensing Committee and the Committee of the Licensing Authority had up to a maximum of 15 Members and all

Committee numbers were determined by Full Council.

Following a vote, which included 1 vote against and 1 abstention, the recommendation was approved.

RESOLVED that following a review of seat allocation, the political balance of Committees as listed in the report be approved.

125/22 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 12)

Planning Committee

Councillor Crane be replaced by Councillor Plummer and Councillor Taylor be appointed as substitute.

Licensing Committee/Committee of the Licensing Authority

Councillor Wickerson be appointed to the above Committees.

126/22 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 13)

None.

127/22 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (AGENDA ITEM 14)

None.

128/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 15)

Not required.

129/22 RESTRICTED CABINET MINUTES: 21 NOVEMBER 2022 (AGENDA ITEM 16)

These Minutes were not discussed.

Vice-Chairman's Closing Remarks

Councillor Wilkinson, the Vice-Chairman in the Chair, again apologised for the livestreaming issues but wished all Members and Officers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN