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**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**CABINET**

**Held on Tuesday, 23 June 2009 at 9.30 am in  
Norfolk Room, The Committee Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mr J.W. Nunn (Chairman)	Lady Fisher
Mr S. Askew	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mr P.D. Claussen	Mrs A.L. Steward

**Also Present**

Mr J.P. Cowen	Mrs D.K.R. Irving
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**In Attendance**

Ian Vargeson	- Member Services Manager
Robert Barlow	- Assistant Director (Governance)
Julie Britton	- Senior Member Services Officer
Ray Johnson	- Assistant Director (Services)
Tim Leader	- Deputy Chief Executive
Stephen James	- Policy and Performance Manager
Catherine Lang	- Community Development Officer

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**53/09 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**54/09 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Theresa Hewett and Robin Goreham.

**55/09 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Mrs D. Irving and Mr P. Cowen.

**56/09 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

The Chairman wished the Assistant Director (Services) all the very best for his forthcoming retirement and thanked him for all he had done for the Authority. Ray had been a great asset and would be sadly missed.

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**57/09 AREA BASED GRANT FOR PLANNING AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report which concerned the release of £45,000 funding for Planning and Climate Change from the Area Based Grant to enable the Authority to undertake the evidence based work as part of the requirements to address climate change through the Local Development Framework.

As a result of the supplement to PPS1 the Local Development Framework was now required to have policies that specifically addressed both the factors contributing towards, and impacts arising from, climate change. The Planning Inspectorate had indicated that in order for it to be satisfied with the Core Strategy further evidence would need to be produced in the form of a Stage 2 Energy Study for the areas of Thetford, Attleborough and Snetterton. If the funding was approved, the work would be procured to a company who had successfully undertaken the first Energy Study on behalf of Breckland Council.

Without this key piece of work there would be a risk that one or more parts of the LDF might fail the tests of soundness related to the credibility of its evidence base.

The Executive Member for the Planning and the Environment Portfolio supported the recommendation.

The Deputy Leader asked whether this work would have a major effect on Snetterton. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Stage 1 Energy Study for the A11 had already been completed and had reaffirmed the known energy constraints at Snetterton. The Stage 2 Energy Study would be principally focused around Thetford and Attleborough; however, surrounding communities, including Snetterton would be supported.

Subject to the Core Strategy being found sound the Council would deliver Area Action Plans for both Thetford and Attleborough and Snetterton which would set out the precise locations for growth. They would also include details of the policies and locations to deliver innovative and localised decentralised or renewable energy solutions.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission pointed out that one of the biggest issues that had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Green Agenda Development Panel was energy resource. At that meeting a suggestion had been put forward for the Council to undertake an energy study of its own estate.

The Deputy Chief Executive asked Members to refer to paragraphs 3.2.4 and 3.2.5 of the report which explained what the Stage 2 Energy Study would involve.

The Deputy Leader asked for a general view of the overall resilience of power sources within rural areas. Members were informed that paragraph 3.2.7 of the report provided details of a tool that could be used to monitor whether schemes were genuinely meeting the targets for on-site renewable or decentralised energy provision.

**David  
Spencer**

**Action By**

Options

Option A

Members approve the release of £45,000 of the Planning and Climate Change element of Area Based Grant in 2009/10 to enable the preparation of evidence base work to meet the requirements to tackle climate change through the Local Development Framework.

Earmark the use of £22,500 of the 2010/11 Area Based Grant for further Planning and Climate Change work.

Option B

Members not approve the release of £45,000 to enable the completion of the LDF Evidence base.

Although some of the evidence base would be completed not all that was considered essential would be and therefore there would be a risk that one or more parts of the LDF might fail the tests of soundness related to the credibility of its evidence base.

Reasons

Members were asked to approve option A of the report for the reasons given in 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) £45,000 be released from the Planning and Climate Change element of Area Based Grant to enable the preparation of evidence base work to meet the requirements to tackle climate change through the Local Development Framework (LDF); and
- 2) the remaining £22,500 be earmarked from the 2010/11 Area Based Grant for Planning and Climate Change, subject to a further report to Cabinet detailing the proposed spend before the funding is released.

**58/09 UNIVERSITY QUALIFICATIONS FOR COUNCILLORS (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Members were provided with the revised recommendations from the Member Development Panel.

The Member Services Manager presented the report which provided details of a new Post Graduate University qualification on Local Governance that was available to Elected Members.

The programme aimed to help Councillors meet and respond to the demands of community leadership, organisational change and efficiency.

The Executive Member for Communities had been asked to point out by

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the Executive Member for Performance and Communications that although she was in support of Member development she felt that this would not have any particular benefit to Breckland residents. Member training could continue without this type of scheme and without the added costs.

The Deputy Leader said that although he had not seen the syllabus for this particular course he failed to see how politics could be taught. He felt that the Council should concentrate on teaching Members skills that were relevant; an academic qualification would not be of any benefit to the public.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission endorsed the aforementioned comments.

The options available to Members were as follows:

- 1) to agree the revised Member Development Panel's recommendations as circulated;
- 2) to suggest alternative recommendations;
- 3) to do nothing.

**Reasons**

Breckland Council was seeking to support its Members in undertaking training and development. At the moment, this qualification appeared to be the only one available specifically aimed at Elected Members.

The course content would help Members in their roles at Breckland Council and the course cost was comparable to other courses of its type.

The number of Members who should be permitted to undertake the course each year, the method of selection which should be used and the level of financial assistance which should be payable would need to be determined.

**RESOLVED** not to support the recommendations put forward by the Member Development Panel on the grounds that the course programme was too costly and of little practical benefit to the community.

**59/09 GARVESTONE VILLAGE HALL (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The Community Development Officer presented the report which outlined a request for £20,000 from Capital Match Funding towards the cost of building a new Village Hall in Garvestone. This would provide the residents of Garvestone and surrounding parishes with a larger space for recreational and community purposes.

Members were informed that £378k of funding towards this project had already been approved.

The Executive Member for the Communities Portfolio supported the

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recommendation and explained that Garvestone had been successful in a highly competitive application with the Big Lottery Community Buildings Fund.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agreed that the Hall was in dire need of improvement. In response to a question with regard to the land that had been purchased by Garvestone, the Community Development Officer explained that the land would provide the Hall with public open space, a new playing field and a bowling green.

The Deputy Leader felt that being part of the Upper Yare Partnership had demonstrated the advantages of parishes working together and could be the prudent way ahead for other parishes to follow. He supported the development of a one centre facility.

Options

Option 1

To support Garvestone Village Hall by awarding a grant of £20,000 thus enabling them to create a new build Village Hall which would be seen as the hub of the community, creating new opportunities for the residents of Garvestone and the surrounding areas.

Option 2

To reject the request of £20,000.

Reasons

The project was being delivered to a proactive community by a proactive Village Hall Committee wishing to develop its parish for future growth and community events.

The project would create new opportunities for a rural area, encouraging community cohesion and completing the final stage of the new open space, recreational and community project.

Garvestone had been successful in a highly competitive funding application with the Big Lottery Community Buildings Fund. This fund had been oversubscribed and therefore it showed the standard of the application and dedication from the applicants.

**RESOLVED** that a Capital Match Funding sum of £20,000 towards the cost of building a new Village Hall be approved, subject to:

- 1) a maximum of £20,000 or 3.3% of the cost of the project ,whichever is the lower;
- 2) confirmation of the total cost of the project; and
- 3) the balance of all other funding being confirmed.

**Catherine  
Lang**

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**60/09 GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4**  
**(AGENDA ITEM 10)**

The Policy and Performance Manager presented the report which detailed how well the Council was using its resources to deliver value for money as well as better sustainable outcomes for local people.

Managing Finances

The Year End out-turn for the Council's budget was highlighted which reflected the impact of the Icelandic interest impairment that showed an overall under-spend of £211,199. Variances for this were discussed.

In terms of income, Members' attention was drawn to the table which reflected actual income against forecast. The variances in terms of commercial property income, bed & breakfast and garden waste were explained.

Members were informed of the decisions required for grants approval and revenue projects carry over.

Managing Performance

Members' attention was drawn to the Annual Delivery Plan overview which reflected 79% of all project and indicators being delivered for 2008/09.

Performance against each of the outcome themes from the Business Plan was discussed. Project and indicator delivery against these themes were highlighted. It was noted that the Green Agenda Development Panel was looking at an environmental themed delivery.

Performance indicators, separate from the Business Plan themes, were also discussed with particular reference being made to Planning National Indicators. It was explained that whilst two out of three of these had missed targets, 'stretch' targets had been set at the beginning of the year. It was noted that for major planning applications there had been a 5% improvement on last year's performance which was the highest out-turn over the last five years. In terms of other planning applications this indicator missed target by 0.05% but was an improvement of approximately 4% on the previous year.

Members were advised of the section of the report (pages 70 and 71) which detailed activity taken across the Council in response to the economic downturn.

Satisfaction levels for the Customer Contact Centre and Customer Service Centres were highlighted and Members were informed that the Council was working towards a Customer Service Excellence Standard.

In terms of complaints it was noted that there had been a decrease of 17 against Quarter 3 and a 29% fall in complaints overall against 2007/08.

Compliments had seen a 95% increase between Quarter 3 and Quarter 4

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with 37 being received.

Referring to Serco customer satisfaction, Members were advised that an increase had been recorded across all three measures when compared to Quarter 3. The total complaints for Serco in Quarter 4 were 89; this was a 19% fall against Quarter 3 and was the lowest for the year.

It was noted that there had been an increase in complaints in March and an analysis had established an increase relating to waste collection; unique causes for this had not been identified. It was also mentioned that, in context of the number of bins actually collected, this figure was minimal. Serco compliments were also highlighted which had increased to 11 for Quarter 4.

Customer satisfaction for Thetford Leisure Centre saw 72% of customers satisfied or very satisfied for Quarter 4. Dereham Leisure Centre saw a 91% customer satisfaction level for the same quarter which was the highest for the year.

**Governing the Council**

Members were advised that no new risks had been added and that no risks had been deleted during Quarter 4. Four risks had increased and two risks had decreased. These were managed through the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were informed of the Annual Audit Inspection Letter that had previously been presented to Cabinet which had seen the overall Use of Resources score rise to a 3 with an increase in all areas except one.

**Our People**

Salary costs against the 97% budget had seen an under-spend of £156,000. In terms of sickness absence Members were informed that the 'stretch' target of 7.5 days had been missed by 1.32 days with the out-turn being 8.82 days. This was, however, an improvement of 0.86 days per employee when compared to 2007/08 figures. Encouragingly, the first two months performance for this indicator had seen a continued improvement.

The Deputy Leader asked how the data from the Customer Contact Centre was used, and how the overall satisfaction figure was derived. In response, the Policy and Performance Manager explained that the data was captured for National Indicator (NI) 14 which recorded avoidable contact. This information would assist the Council's performance in relation to the Efficiency indicator NI 179. An example on how the Contact centre data could be used would be front office optimisation work undertaken by the Business Improvement Team which could help to shape the design and delivery of the Council's services. As far as how the overall satisfaction figure was derived, Members were informed that the information had been gathered from the Place Surveys.

The Executive Member for the Planning and Environment Portfolio understood that the budget for her portfolio would be separated from

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Business Transformation in the future.

**Reasons**

See report.

**Options**

To approve or not to approve the recommendations.

**RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- 1) the grants from the awarding bodies as detailed in the report be accepted;
- 2) the budget for both the grant income and expenditure that the Council would incur in meeting the grant conditions be approved;
- 3) the revenue projects as detailed in the report be carried over and moved into the Organisational Development Reserve to draw upon in 2009/10.

**61/09 ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

The correct version of the Minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee dated 21 May 2009 were circulated and noted.

The Deputy Leader wished for it to be recorded that he had voted against the proposed reduction in the targets for collection of Council Tax (Minute No. 15/09 (b) refers).

**62/09 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)**

The next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Tuesday, 4 August at 9.30am in the Norfolk Room.

The meeting closed at 10.05 am

CHAIRMAN