
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

**Held on Tuesday, 27 October 2009 at 9.30 am in
Norfolk Room, The Committee Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr S. Askew
Mr P.D. Claussen
Lady Fisher

Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mrs A.L. Steward
Mrs T. Hewett

Also Present

Mr A.P. Joel
Mrs D.K.R. Irving

Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr W.P. Borrett

In Attendance

Julie Britton
Stephen McGrath
Phil Daines
Mark Stanton
Mark Finch
Mark Stokes
Monica Coffey

- Senior Member Services Officer
- Member Development Team Leader
- Development Services Manager
- Economic Development Manager
- Finance Manager
- Deputy Chief Executive
- Community and Customer Services Manager
- Land Management Officer
- Chief Executive
- Director of Organisational Development
- Marketing and Communications Manager

Zoe Footer
Trevor Holden
Maxine O'Mahony
Robert Leigh

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91/09 PLANNING ON-LINE PRESENTATION (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the Planning On-Line presentation.

John Durbin from Capita was in attendance to answer any technical questions.

Members were provided with a step by step visual guide.

Ann Steward, the Executive Member for the Planning and Regeneration Portfolio, informed Members that the launch of this new facility was an improvement to the planning service which could be attributed to the early success of the Capita Symonds contract. Whilst online planning information was quite commonly found on local authorities' websites the advantages would be noticeable for Breckland residents in rural areas as it negated the requirement to visit the Council offices to view application and appeal documents or track the progress of applications.

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She said that many different online systems had been looked at but this particular system, that had been trialled during the past month, was felt to be more user friendly. The new facility also allowed the public to view relevant documentation that had to accompany certain planning applications such as design statements etc.

Planning online had been live since 1st October 2009 and would soon be available in all the Council's Customer Service Centres.

In response to a concern as to whether Members and Parishes would still be allowed to receive paper copies of the applications that affected their Wards, Members were informed that this method would not change as not all Parish Council meetings had internet access.

Any suggestions for further improvement would be gratefully received.

A press release would be prepared for distribution following the Cabinet meeting and would also be followed by a feature in the November issue of Voice.

92/09 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

93/09 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Nunn and Mr R Walker.

94/09 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

95/09 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Lady K Fisher wished for it to be noted that a personal interest would be declared in any site specifics that were discussed in relation to Agenda item 14.

Mr. A Joel declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13 being a Member of Old Buckenham Parish Council.

96/09 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The following Members were in attendance:

Mrs D. Irving
Mrs L. Turner
Mr B. Borrett
Mr A. Joel.

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97/09 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Chairman welcomed parishioners from the village of Old Buckenham who were in attendance for Agenda item 13.

98/09 BUDGET SETTING (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Head of Finance presented the Budget Setting report for consultation.

The report outlined the 2010/11 revenue and capital estimates for the General Fund and the proposals for the setting of discretionary fees and charges.

The Local Government Act 2003 had introduced a requirement that the Chief Financial Officer reports on the robustness of the budget. The estimates had been prepared in a prudent manner; however, it had been recognised that there were a number of elements outside of the Council's control and these had been identified in Section 17 of the report and would be mitigated through the budget monitoring and risk management processes of the Council.

The budget consultation process for 2010/11 would comprise of a number of elements. Firstly, the Council had undertaken a survey with the Citizens Panel. Questions had been asked about the level of council tax that the Council should charge next year, and ways to fund other improvements to services. Secondly, a Business Rate Payers consultation event had been scheduled which would hopefully produce a useful insight from key consultees. The budget proposals would also be taken through to the Audit Committee to allow challenge from both a financial and governance view point. Finally, by bringing these proposals forward, with a consultation period up until 11th January 2010, it would allow for a lengthy period of consultation for any interested parties who might wish to challenge and review the Council's income and expenditure plans. The output would be to submit a supported budget proposal to Cabinet in January 2010 which was affordable, sustainable and aligned to the priorities of the Council.

The main areas of interest were highlighted:

- No rise in Council Tax
- No rise in budget requirement
- Salary savings
- Efficiencies
- Fees and charges remained largely unchanged
- No expected rise in Government grant.

The draft proposals would lead to an indicative 0% increase in Council Tax if adopted

The Chairman drew attention to the Executive summary of the report. He felt that the most worthy item to note was the aspiration of the Council to keep the council tax levels at 0% until 2012. He stated that Breckland

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Council would aspire to maintain high quality services whilst delivering efficiencies in these times of financial uncertainty without any expected increase in Government grant.

The Leader of the Opposition had sent in his comments and observations by email for the Chairman to announce. He wished for the Cabinet to note that a Task & Finish Group had recently been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission to look at all forms of rate relief. The organisations he particularly referred to were the Dereham Band and the Boxing Club. He also referred to the proposed funding towards Dereham Memorial Hall.

The Chairman reminded Members that this budget report was for consultation only and that the rental charge for the Dereham Band and the Boxing Club would be decided on their own merits. As far as the Memorial Hall was concerned, Members were also reminded that this project formed part of a growth bid and even though the Cabinet had supported the feasibility study no commitment had been given in the way of funding. He pointed out that this matter would be discussed at a future Cabinet meeting.

The Executive Member for the Economic Health & Housing Portfolio said that he would resist going back to charging a peppercorn rent for the Boxing Club.

Referring to the Council Tax leaflet that had caused the Council problems last year, the Chairman asked that an Officer be given total responsibility for the new publication. He also highlighted the need to inform Dereham, Thetford, Watton and Bawdeswell about the special expense charge that would be applied to its Council Tax for the maintenance of lighting on public footpaths.

The Chairman congratulated the Officers and Members for producing such a balanced budget in such difficult circumstances.

Options

No alternative options were presented; however, the Cabinet was requested to consider amendments to the budget proposals during the period of consultation. It was usual for there to be significant change to a draft budget before it was eventually finalised. The Cabinet was encouraged to focus at a strategic level as to the extent it wished to maintain existing levels of service, how services were priorities, to what extent it was prudent to allocate reserves and to seek assurance as to how any budgetary shortfalls might be addressed.

Reason

To comply with the budgetary and policy framework.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the revenue estimates for 2010/11 and outline position through to 2014/15 be endorsed for consultation;

**Robert
Barlow,
Alison
Chubbock,
Mark Finch**

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- 2) the capital estimates and associated funding for 2010/11 and outline position through to 2014/15 be endorsed for consultation;
- 3) the fees and charges shown at appendix 4 of the report, for adoption on 1st April 2010, be endorsed for consultation;
- 4) the 2010/11 revenue growth bids be endorsed for consultation; and
- 5) the Cabinet consults on the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2010/11 at £64.05

99/09 ACTIVE LAND MANAGEMENT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Land Management Officer was in attendance to answer questions.

The purpose of the report was for the Cabinet to consider the adoption of a framework for the active management of surplus land held by the Council and to improve an implementation plan for Officers to deliver. It had been recognised that the success of this framework would be defined as the benefits delivered to the community.

Comments from the Leader of the Opposition were read out. He knew that reasonable steps had to be taken to increase the Council's assets but implored the Cabinet to be very sensitive with new developments.

The Chairman explained that it had always been the Council's policy to transfer non-strategic open space to the Parish Councils and although in favour of such a framework felt that the report should be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission before any decision was made.

The Executive Member for the Environmental Well-Being and Customer Contact Portfolio was disappointed that the report, under paragraph 3.1, did not reflect or mention any positive aspect to biodiversity projects. It was agreed that such projects would be included in stage 2 of the framework.

Reasons

The adoption of the framework would provide clarity and a sense of direction as regards to the Council options and how it was seeking to deliver a programme of work in a managed fashion.

To recognise that Active Land Management of the Council's assets were key in the assessment of the Use of Resources.

To enhance the Council's ability to deliver community based outcomes.

To provide a source of funding for both the Council's revenue and capital spending plans.

Options

The Council would need to decide on how quickly it chose to progress Active Land Management. The suggestion was that 10 parcels were jointly progressed over the next 6 months and this would then be

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repeated until further land identification was required. At the end of the 6 months the Council should know what its intentions were for the plots of land taken through stages 1 to 2 of the framework. Clearly the delivery of stage 3 might at times be outside of the Councils control. I would advocate that the Council, where possible, do not seek to create an industry within these early stages but simply applies common sense. This allowed the Development Control process to adjudicate upon development suitability and where possible remove any subjectivity from the Council intentions.

The Council might want to take a decision on how this work was prioritised and whether it could run concurrently with other more exciting opportunities and projects that might be present outside of this framework. On deciding this, the necessary resourcing and targets would need to be reflected within the relevant Service Plans and Personal Performance Targets.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the framework for the management of surplus land be adopted;
- 2) the implementation plan be approved; and
- 3) a positive aspect to biodiversity projects be considered in stage 2 of the framework.

**Robert
Barlow
/Zoe Footer**

100/09 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER PLUS (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Member Development Team Leader presented the report.

Breckland Council had successfully achieved Member Charter Status in November 2008. Reflected in this had been the Council's commitment to achieve its suggested action plan (see paragraph 3.1.4 of the report).

Since the inspection, the Member Development Panel (in consultation with the Portfolio Member and other Members) had decided how they wished the Member Development Team to provide Member development and training in future. A brief update of the current position with respect to the outstanding standards required to meet Charter Plus had been listed at paragraph 3.2.8 of the report.

With the exception of three of the items listed, Breckland Council was already committed to achieving the assessment criteria for Member Development Charter Plus.

The cost would be contained within the allocated budget as there was no additional cost for applying for Charter Plus status.

The Council was due for an 18 month re-assessment on the initial Member Charter Status in May 2010; therefore, it was proposed to apply for both Charter Status and Charter Plus in September 2010 which would mean that the Team only had to prepare for just one inspection.

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The Chairman asked whether the Member Development Team had sufficient capacity for this work. He also suggested that Member performance should be appraised in future. The Member Development Team Leader confirmed that the work commitments listed in the report were within the Team's current targets. With regard to appraisals, it was hoped to roll out a trial of the 360 appraisal later this municipal year.

The Chief Executive reminded the Cabinet of the excellent comments made by the Inspector when the Council had first been awarded Charter Status. Charter Plus would really underpin the learning Council that it was.

Options

- 1) Breckland District Council signs up to working towards Member Development Charter Plus status.
- 2) Breckland District Council does not sign up to working towards Member Development Charter Plus status.
- 3) To do nothing.

Reasons

The Member Development Charter Plus process offered the opportunity to focus on further challenge and drive for continuous Member Development improvement by shifting expectations and "good practice" in Member Development. It also supported efforts to become more efficient, innovative and engaged with local residents.

RECOMMEND to Council that Breckland Council signs up to working towards Member Development Charter Plus status.

**Stephen
McGrath/Ian
Vargeson**

101/09 MENTORING FOR MEMBERS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Member Development Team Leader presented the report which recommended the approval and adoption of a new Mentoring Policy for Elected Members.

The policy had been developed not to be too rigorous; mentoring would be entirely voluntary either as a mentor or a mentee. There would be no requirement for an Elected Member to undertake training or use the documentation as shown in appendix 1 of the report.

The main reason this Policy had been developed was due to the fact that eight of the newly elected Councillors since 2007 had sought advice and assistance from the more experienced Members.

Options

- 1) To approve the new Mentoring Policy for Elected Members.
- 2) Not to approve the Policy.

	<u>Action By</u>
<p data-bbox="326 237 440 264"><u>Reasons</u></p> <p data-bbox="326 300 1227 359">The new policy would provide a framework for Mentoring at the Authority, should Members wish to use it.</p> <p data-bbox="326 394 1175 422"><u>RESOLVED</u> that the new Mentoring for Members Policy be approved.</p>	<p data-bbox="1252 338 1349 386">Stephen McGrath</p>
<p data-bbox="245 457 1045 485">102/09 <u>DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS (AGENDA ITEM 12)</u></p> <p data-bbox="326 520 1227 611">The report recommended a calendar of meetings for 2010-2011 for the Council's approval. A draft calendar had been attached to the Agenda for Members' consideration.</p> <p data-bbox="326 646 1078 674">The Chairman conveyed his thanks to the Officer responsible.</p> <p data-bbox="326 709 423 737"><u>Options</u></p> <p data-bbox="326 772 1227 831">To recommend the attached schedule of meetings for the Council's approval.</p> <p data-bbox="326 867 639 894">To suggest amendments.</p> <p data-bbox="326 930 440 957"><u>Reasons</u></p> <p data-bbox="326 993 1227 1083">To comply with Standing Orders and the scheme of delegation for the recommendation to Council for adoption of a calendar of meetings for 2010-2011</p> <p data-bbox="326 1119 1227 1178"><u>RECOMMEND</u> to Council that the schedule of Council and Committee meetings for 2010-2011 be approved.</p>	<p data-bbox="1252 1087 1349 1157">Elaine Wilkes/Ian Vargeson</p>
<p data-bbox="245 1213 1166 1272">103/09 <u>GRANT PANEL AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 13)</u></p> <p data-bbox="326 1308 1227 1493">At the Cabinet meeting held on 4th August 2009 it had been agreed that a more strategic approach be taken to grant funding across all Council departments, including the administration of the Green Grants Scheme, the creation of a Pride in Breckland Grants Scheme, the establishment of a Grant Funding Panel and the introduction of competitive bidding rounds for all grant funding.</p> <p data-bbox="326 1528 1219 1556">The first Grant Funding Panel meeting had been held on 27 August 2009.</p> <p data-bbox="326 1591 1227 1650">The Community and Customer Services Manager presented the report and summarised the funding decisions that had been made by the Panel.</p> <p data-bbox="326 1686 1227 1839">Two applications for Match Funding had been submitted to the Council prior to the first Grant Funding Panel. Old Buckenham Village Hall Committee had requested £10,000 from the Capital Match Funding pot to extend and refurbish the Village Hall kitchen area. The total cost of the project was £34,979.</p> <p data-bbox="326 1875 1227 1934">NEET Tricks had requested £20,000 for the Kick-Start project from Revenue Match Funding to run a project aimed at providing direct</p>	

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employment opportunities for up to 40 young people.

Both recommendations would be subject to the criteria listed on the Proforma Bs as appended to the report.

Adrian Joel, the Ward Member for Old Buckenham advised that the Village Hall was regularly used by all age groups and the kitchen refurbishment was key to many of the organisations who used it particularly the luncheon club.

He pointed out that the Hall was a lifeline to many senior citizens in the village, particularly to the ones that did not have any transport. He mentioned the various society events that were held in the Hall and the amount of organisations that had to be turned away due to the lack of kitchen facilities.

Breckland Council's Food Safety Team had been involved in the project right from the start regarding the kitchen refurbishment.

It was announced that the Match Funding grants had now been received from the Big Lottery and Norfolk Community Foundation. A third of the total cost would be provided by the Parish Council.

Mr Bartlett, the Vice-Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee, was in attendance. He reported that 89% of parishioners had agreed that the kitchen should be refurbished.

The Cabinet was informed that the Village Hall Committee had also approached Norfolk County Council to resurface the car park but to no avail.

The Grant Funding Panel had also recommended that for the remainder of the financial year 2009/10, the arts allocation for Gifted & Talented funding of £5,000 be utilised to provide an Access Arts fund that offered financial support of up to £500 for an extensive and/or enrichment of art activities that an individual or group already took part in.

Members were informed of the grants awarded under the Pride in Breckland and Gifted & Talented Grant schemes.

The Executive Member for Communities and Benefits whole heartedly supported the recommendations and was absolutely delighted that she was now responsible of such a worthy portfolio. She asked Members to support all three recommendations.

Option 1

- 1) To approve individual match funding applications for the full amount requested.
- 2) To award individual match funding applications a lesser amount
- 3) To reject individual match funding applications.

Option 2

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- 1) To approve change from Gifted & Talented Arts to Access Arts Fund for 2009/10
- 2) To reject change from Gifted & Talented Arts to Access Arts Fund for 2009/10 and continue with Gifted and Talented process.

Reasons

See report.

Old Buckenham Village Hall

RESOLVED that the Capital Match Funding application of £10,000 to refurbish Old Buckenham Village Hall be approved, subject to:

- 1) a maximum sum of £10,000 or 29% 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.

NEET Trick Project

RESOLVED that the Capital Match Funding sum of £20,000 towards the NEET Trick project be approved, subject to:

- 1) a maximum of £20,000, or 21.6% 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.

Gifted and Talented Arts Fund

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Gifted and Talented Arts fund be endorsed.

104/09 REVACTIVE PROJECT MATCH FUNDING (AGENDA ITEM 14)

The Economic Development Manager presented the report which requested an investment of up to £228,000 for the RevActive project over a four year period starting in the financial year 2009/10.

The RevActive project had been developed to build on the first phase of REV to support a broad range of targeted businesses along the A11 corridor.

It was highlighted that there were further opportunities to receive funding from other organisations/authorities which would allow Breckland Council's contribution to be reduced.

The project had regional significance and if supported would act as an exemplar model for others.

Catherine
Lang

Action By

The report would be considered by the Audit Committee on 13th November 2009.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the supplementary agenda which included the Proforma B and the suggested amendment to the recommendation at section 2.1 of the report.

The Executive Member for the Environmental Well-Being and Customer Contact Portfolio felt that as the whole project was dependent upon external funding being received a third recommendation should be added. The Chief Executive suggested that the project should only proceed subject to external funding being secured".

The Cabinet was happy to endorse the report subject to the revised and additional recommendations being incorporated.

Options

- 1) To support the project by underwriting an investment of up to £228k revenue for the project.
- 2) Do not support investment in the project.

Reasons

The RevActive project should be supported as it helped grow and sustain businesses in Breckland along the A11 corridor (and beyond) Breckland Council's primary area for future population and housing growth by reducing business overheads to safeguard existing jobs and create new employment opportunities. The project would also contribute to meeting the Councils NI 186 targets by reducing carbon omissions and reducing energy consumption amongst high end business users in the district and further afield. The project had secured support already from a wide number of economic and environmental national, regional and sub-regional partners both through investment and strategic support.

RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 1) the investment of up to £228,000 in the REVActive project over four years starting in the financial year 2009/10 as set in the project budget spreadsheet within the report be approved, subject to:
 - i) a satisfactory review of the REV Programme budget being carried out by the Audit Committee meeting on 13 November 2009; and
 - ii) external funding being secured.
- 2) an annual report be received on the performance of the project and a final evaluation report be received at the end of the project.

**Mark
Stanton/
Ian
Vargeson/
Elaine
Wilkes**

Action By

105/09 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 17)

The next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Tuesday, 8th December 2009 at 9.30am in the Norfolk Room.

The meeting closed at 10.35 am

CHAIRMAN