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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday, 29 September 2010 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

PRESENT

Mr R.W. Duffield (Chairman)	Mrs K. Millbank
Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman)	Mr I. Sherwood
Mrs J. Ball	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mrs M.P. Chapman-Allen	Mr S.G. Bambridge
Mrs S.M. Matthews	Mr S. J. F. Rogers

Also Present

Mr J.W. Nunn

In Attendance

Julie Britton	- Senior Committee Officer
Mark Broughton	- Scrutiny Officer
Mark Stokes	- Interim Chief Executive
Robert Walker	- Director - Community Services
Natalie King	- HR Manager
Kathryn Ralphs	- Human Resources Adviser
Daniel Cox	- Marketing & Communications Officer

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32/10 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Mr Bambridge was welcomed to the meeting as a new Member of the Committee

33/10 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Balaam and Mr D Williams.

34/10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Chairman and Mrs K Millbank declared a personal interest in reference to agenda item 7 as they were both smokers.

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**35/10 LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE : 16 SEPTEMBER 2010
(AGENDA ITEM 5)**

a) Staff Forum (Minute No. 28/10)

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the implementation of a Staff Forum be approved;
- 2) a formal election process be conducted in all team areas;
- 3) the performance of the Forum be reviewed after one year by the Local Joint Consultative Committee; and
- 4) all meetings of the Forum to be held during the lunch-time period.

**Kathryn
Ralphs**

b) Smoking Policy (Minute No. 29/10)

This item was discussed in conjunction with Agenda item 7 (see Minute No 37/10 below)

c) Christmas Leave (Minute No. 30/10)

RESOLVED that the additional half day leave already granted to all full-time staff to take during December be approved for part-time staff on a pro-rata basis.

**Neil
Fordham,
Natalie
King**

d) Cabinet Member Representative (Minute No. 32/10(b))

RECOMMEND to Cabinet that a Cabinet Member or an Executive Support Member be requested to attend future meetings of the Local Joint Consultative Committee on a rota basis.

**Julie
Britton,
Stephen
McGrath**

e) Adoption

The Minutes of the Local Joint Consultative Committee meeting on 16 September 2010 were adopted.

36/10 TAXI LICENSING FEE INCREASE (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Principal Licensing Officer presented the report which asked Members to consider and determine a proposed level of taxi licence fees for 2010/11.

There was a need for the Licensing Team to raise its revenue to cover the increase in costs and responsibilities and controls placed upon it by the Government and the Council. An increase to the current licence and associated fees had not been implemented in the last three years.

The current fees had been attached at Appendix A of the report. The current fees for each process and the actual cost to the Council and the fee difference were attached at Appendix B of the report.

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The proposed fee increase sought to set reasonable fees in accordance with the legislation and to ensure that council tax payers were not subsidising taxi drivers.

The Chairman felt that this increase seemed sensible but had concerns with regard to Breckland out pricing itself against other local authorities in the area. He asked if Breckland risked losing any business if this increase was approved. In response, the Principal Licensing Officer explained that this increase had been based on the new system and was, by law, the appropriate way to calculate fees. She pointed out that again, by law, no council was allowed to make a profit from such fees.

A Member felt that the whole matter of costs needed to be looked but was not at all keen to increase the fees in such hard times and asked whether the fees could be increased gradually over a period of time.

Another Member thanked the Principal Licensing Officer and the Licensing Team for all their hard work but disagreed with the aforementioned comment. He felt that the fees, if brought in on a gradual basis, would penalise some taxi drivers. He further felt that taxi drivers had had an advantage for some time by paying just £10 for a licence which he had no doubt had cost the Council money. The Principal Licensing Officer felt that thanks should also be conveyed to Adam Colby from the Business Improvement Team who had assisted in the implementation of the new system.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the fees had been based on actual costs to the Council and had not been based on what other councils were charging. The Principal Licensing Officer explained that hackney carriage vehicle, private hire vehicle and private hire operators' licences were like driving licences – once they had one they would not have to re-apply only if they were lost.

A Member supported the recommendation and proposed that the new scheme be adopted and the fee be rounded up to the nearest pound.

RESOLVED that the licence fee be increased to an appropriate level for 2010/11 and consultation with the trade on the proposed increase be carried out.

**Stephanie
Butcher**

37/10 SMOKING POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The HR Manager presented the report which was discussed in conjunction with the Local Joint Consultative Committee recommendations (see Minute No. 35/10(b) above).

The report outlined the results from the recent smoking survey which had been conducted with all staff. The outcome had revealed that there was a need for more consistency in which smoking breaks were taken and how it should be monitored. The results also revealed that staff preferred Breckland Council not to become a smoke free site.

The HR Manager advised that 50% of staff already clocked in and out for

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smoking breaks. This policy if approved would formalise the taking of such breaks to ensure consistency amongst those staff who smoked.

The report also outlined the options for the relocation of the smoking shelter.

Members were asked to refer to the Local Joint Consultative Committee recommendations.

A Member queried the statistics of the percentage of smokers who already clocked out and asked if an analysis could be carried out. The HR Manager declined the aforementioned request as the figures were already in the survey. The Leader of the Council pointed out that the flexi-time system did not discriminate between smokers and non-smokers; staff already clocked out for non-work related reasons. He further pointed out that the new policy would apply to all staff which included managers.

The Chairman felt that the main reason for this policy was to make it fair for everyone but he did have reservations about the smoking shelter relocation.

A Member felt that the smoking shelter should be relocated to the other side of the building so that the public visiting the Council could use it. He urged the Committee to accommodate the smokers.

There was much debate as to where the smoking shelter should be situated.

It was agreed that the relocation of the smoking shelter should be deferred until further information could be gathered as to where the most suitable place would be to put it without it being too far away from the main building but to eliminate the risk of smoke being carried on the wind through open windows. It was questioned whether the existing shelter could be modified in any way so that the smoke was more contained.

The Deputy Chief Executive pointed out that two areas had been identified. The Asset Management Team was looking at different designs, specifications and wind direction.

A Member suggested that some type of foliage should be planted in between the smoking shelter and the building if moved.

RESOLVED that the Smoking Policy be adopted and the taking of cigarette breaks be formalised to ensure consistency, subject to:

- 1) the Policy being brought in on a trial basis for the first six months with affect from 1 November 2010;
- 2) the Policy being reviewed by the Local Joint Consultative Committee following the six month trial period;
- 3) further views being requested on the Personal Liability section within the Policy; and
- 4) the relocation of the smoking shelter to be deferred until further

**Natalie
King**

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investigative measures are carried out.

38/10 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The next meeting on Wednesday, 17 November 2010 at 10.00am in the Norfolk were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.45 am

CHAIRMAN