

# Public Document Pack

---

## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

### **At a Meeting of the**

### **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Held on Wednesday, 7 March 2012 at 10.00 am in  
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

#### **PRESENT**

Mr R.W. Duffield (Chairman)	Mr B J English
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr B J Skull
Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman)	

#### **Also Present**

Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris	Mrs D.K.R. Irving
Mr A.C. Stasiak	Mr M. S. Robinson

#### **In Attendance**

Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
Natalie King	- HR Manager
Alison Chubbock	- Accountancy Manager
Kathryn Ralphs	- Senior HR Advisor
Jane Osborne	- Committee Officer
Graham Parfitt	- Legal Executive
Lindy Warmer	- Senior Economic Development Officer
Susan Smith	- Funding Support Officer
Darryl Smith	- Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Enabling)

#### **Action By**

#### **20/12 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **21/12 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs, Steward, Green & Clark. The absence of Cllr Quadling was noted.

#### **22/12 URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chairman stated that when the Committee asked for updates they should be given them.

He had asked for a report to be produced on Out of Hours Payments.

The HR Manager explained she had a verbal update to provide for the Committee. The Chairman said he had subsequently requested the information from the Housing Manager.

Likewise, the Committee had asked for an update to be brought to them on the Performance Related Pay Scheme following six months of implementation, but this had not happened as it should have done for a scheme which had now been in place for 18 months. The HR Manager stated she also had a verbal update for the Committee regarding PRP (see Minute No. 27/12).

**23/12 LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE : 23 FEBRUARY 2012**

It was noted that Cllr Matthews was marked incorrectly as being present on the Staff side and not on the Employers' side.

Subject to the above it was,

**RESOLVED** to adopt the unconfirmed Minutes of the Local Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 23 February 2012.

**24/12 PROPOSED FOOTPATH DIVERSION PUBLIC FOOTPATH NO. 7 HORNINGTOFT**

Mr G Parfitt, Legal Executive presented the report which sought authority to make an Order under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, diverting a section of public footpath No. 7 Horningtoft in the interests of the land owner and applicant, Mr Aplin. The applicant had requested the proposed diversion to increase privacy and security in and around the family home and by diverting the path along the proposed route would also avert potential dangers and hazards to users if the path was diverted through the paddock area.

Whilst Norfolk County Council, the Ramblers Association and Horningtoft Parish Council had not raised objections, The Open Spaces Society had objected, based on their view that the proposed diversion would be far less convenient for the public.

As a Member of Norfolk County Council, Cllr Kiddle-Morris was supportive of the recommendation in the interests of the owner, lessee or occupier of the land crossed by the path. He had inspected the proposed diversion route and found it more acceptable than the present one.

Cllr Borrett was supportive of the recommendation, as was Cllr Bambridge who stated it was absolutely vital that the views of local people be followed and he questioned Mr Parfitt on a number of points, which were answered as follows :

The new path surface was not substantially different to the old one;  
A small section of the path was in different ownership but authorisation had been received to use it;  
The path was not fenced;  
No items of interest along the existing path would be lost;  
No details were available on the path's current usage;  
The applicant would ensure the new part of the footpath met Highways standards;  
The surface of the diverted route would be made up to a satisfactory standard of Norfolk County Council

**RESOLVED** that the Order be made as recommended in the report.

The Legal Executive left the meeting.

### **25/12 EAST ACTIVE PROJECT RECRUITMENT REPORT**

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris, Executive Member for Assets & Strategic Development presented the report which set out the need to create and recruit for 3 new posts and the reconfiguration of the existing REV ACTIVE Project Manager TP870 post as Low Carbon Business Programme Manager to provide oversight of both REV ACTIVE and East Active. Cabinet had instructed the Economic Development Service to prepare a full East ACTIVE business case for the Department of Communities & Local Government. The project was due to start on or after April 2012 with key funding from Councils that would participate in the project and the European Regional Development Fund.

Lindy Warmer, Senior Economic Development Officer, advised that Economic Development had been really successful in all projects they had undertaken for the last three years. She circulated to all Members a folder containing literature on REV ACTIVE which included details of project successes.

Salary costs would be covered primarily by European Regional Development Funding and funding from the Councils who participated in the project. Susan Smith, Funding Support Officer, Sustainable Economic Development, said the fixed term posts were for the duration of the programme. Over-hang pension costs to the Council would be reclaimable through the project. If redundancy costs arose before the closure of the project, they could be reclaimed.

**RESOLVED** that the two part time and Area Business Manager posts for East ACTIVE outlined in the report be added to the Economic Development Service for a fixed term

of 36 months to run from 2012-2015 and that the reconfigured REV ACTIVE Project Manager TP870 was extended from the end of 2013 to the end of 2015.

Cllr Bambridge believed that Breckland Council were very bold in taking the steps proposed at this particular time.

Cllr Kiddle-Morris and the two Officers left the meeting.

#### **26/12 REVISED UNISON FACILITIES AGREEMENT**

The report presented the revised Facilities Agreement between the organisation and Trade Union and sought approval for implementation of the agreement. The Senior HR Advisor stated that only minimal changes had been made to the Agreement to bring it up to date, which was inline with the ACAS code.

**RESOLVED** that the implementation of the reviewed and updated Trade Union Facilities Agreement for the organisation be approved.

#### **27/12 PAY PROPOSAL 2012/2013**

The report, presented by the Senior HR Advisor outlined the proposals for the pay award for Breckland staff for implementation in April 2012/13. The proposals were based upon the outcomes of negotiations with Unison. The proposed awards were the same as those awarded in 2011.

Unison had met with their members and whilst the offer had been rejected they were aware it had to be enforced.

The Chairman was concerned that the Committee were not aware if the performance related pay (PRP) award worked, so did not know if the proposals in the report were fair or not.

The HR Manager gave a verbal update to the Committee in that she had been involved with discussions with Cllr William Smith, Executive Member for Internal Services, and initial feedback from staff was that the PRP element was not motivational. Proposals put forward to the Executive Member were for HR to conduct a series of staff focus groups over the next few months, following which a report would be brought back to the General Purposes Committee during the early part of the next financial year, with an ideal implementation date early in the 2013 financial year.

The Chairman believed it would have been better to return to the General Purposes Committee after six months following the Scheme's implementation to review whether the Scheme was working and if it was achieving what it set out to achieve.

**Action By**

The Chairman again voiced his concern that the Committee did not know if the Scheme worked, and as they initially approved the Scheme he believed they should know. He therefore asked that that information be reported to the next General Purposes Committee meeting, scheduled for 2 May 2012.

**Natalie  
King**

One Councillor felt very reluctant to approve the recommendation given that the Committee had received no feedback on the Scheme.

It was accepted that it was too late to stop the current pay award cycle as to do so would affect staff morale, but it would be reviewed ready for the next one. The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged there were mixed feelings as to whether the Scheme worked or not, and accepted that it needed to be reviewed.

**RESOLVED** that the Pay Proposal for 2012/13 be approved as recommended in the report, subject to the General Purposes Committee on 2 May 2012 being presented with an updated report on the Scheme.

**28/12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION REVIEW**

A verbal update was provided by the Deputy Chief Executive following the Committee's endorsement of the Community Services Restructure at the General Purposes Committee held on 4 January 2012. He advised that there had been no significant changes to the approved structure following wide staff and partner consultation. Whilst the structure was believed to be the right one, he would be happy to return to the General Purposes Committee in six months time given they had been concerned about whether there would be enough staff within the team.

A Councillor questioned the value of a partnership as he was disappointed with partners' attendance at Committee meetings, and believed the situation should seriously be looked at. The Pride Brand had worked very well and there was a real sense of commitment. However, there was a need to install a sense of responsibility in partners for what was being done.

Cllr Stasiak, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Performance & Business Development agreed that the Pride Brand had achieved great things, as did the Deputy Chief Executive who added that the Pride Brand was a very strong one, but a Pride Board was required with key partners at decision level.

The Deputy Chief Executive left the meeting.

**29/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of the Schedule 12A to the Act.

**30/12 FINANCIAL SERVICES RE-STRUCTURE**

Alison Chubbock, Accountancy Manager advised that two further recommendations had been included to the report a copy of which was circulated to Members, as follows :

To delegate authority to CMT to make any associated redundancies resulting from the restructure, and

To delegate authority to CMT to approve minor amendments to the structure following formal consultation (subject to the objectives of the restructure being met and Unison being in agreement)

She stated if the Committee were minded to approve the recommendations including that of beginning consultation with staff on the proposed Financial Services Restructure, and there were any major changes, a report would be brought back to both the Local Joint Consultative and General Purposes Committees.

A Councillor wanted a definition on what denoted a minor amendment. The Accountancy Manager advised that those would be ones that the Chairman of the Local Joint Consultative Committee and Unison were happy with. However the Councillor was not happy with the possibility of not having had any knowledge of any minor amendments should there be any, especially as CMT did not include a Cabinet Member. He stated that whilst agreement could be made to minor amendments, implications might not be minor. The Accountancy Manager clarified that amendments would not be classed as minor if objectives were not met. It was felt by another Councillor that the Executive Member for Finance & Democratic Services would be kept informed of any minor amendments as the portfolio holder.

Whilst the Chairman agreed with the recommendation to begin consultation with staff, he did not agree with delegated authority to CMT to make any associated redundancies resulting from the restructure, as that is what the General Purposes Committee was for, and therefore it should come back to Committee. With regard to delegated authority to CMT to approve minor amendments to the structure following formal consultation, he wanted it added that this

should be with the agreement of the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee.

The HR Manager asked the Committee if there could be an opportunity for the Finance Manager to discuss and agree any proposals for redundancies outside of the Committee, as to return through the Committee process would protract the period of time the proposed restructure would take, and affected staff may be left in an unknown and vulnerable situation for a significant length of time.

**RESOLVED** that :

1. Consultations with staff begin on the proposed Financial Services restructure
2. Delegate authority to CMT to make any associated redundancies resulting from the restructure subject to the agreement of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the General Purposes Committee
3. Delegate authority to CMT to approve minor amendments to the structure following formal consultation (subject to the objectives of the restructure being met and Unison being in agreement) subject to the agreement of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the General Purposes Committee

The Accountancy Manager left the meeting.

**31/12 HOUSING REGISTER CONTRACT REVIEW**

The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Enabling) gave some background information and context to Members which supported the detailed report with regard to the existing staff delivering the current Housing Register contract being transferred to the Council on the expiration or termination of the contract.

In answer to the question raised as to whether the service could be delivered at the cost and standard indicated as well as improving customers' perception, she advised functions would be brought together to develop a much higher quality service which would be advantageous for the customer and explained how they would run.

**RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that :

1. The current externalised function of allocating affordable housing be delivered as an internal function by the Council
2. The transfer of the existing Housing Register Team from ARPt to the Council on the termination of the contract under TUPE
3. The early termination of the Housing Register contract

**Action By**

**32/12 NEXT MEETING**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 2 May 2012 at 10.00 a.m  
in the Norfolk Room were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

CHAIRMAN