
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Held on Wednesday, 25 July 2012 at 10.05 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr P.J. Duigan (Chairman)	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr T R Carter (Vice- Chairman)	Mr B J Skull
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mrs S Armes (Substitute Member)
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mrs E. M. Jolly (Substitute Member)

Also Present

Mr M. A. Wassell

In Attendance

Jane Osborne	- Committee Officer
Roger Wilkin	- Interim Housing Manager
Sue Daniels	- Electoral Services Manager
Fiona Inston	- Licensing & Business Support Manager

41/12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Bambridge, Green, Quadling and Steward.

Cllrs Jolly and Armes were in attendance as substitutes.

43/12 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The Chairman informed the Committee that at this time, Members had the opportunity to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests not previously registered and any other matter that they wished to declare or have noted with regard to the Code of Conduct.

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44/12 URGENT BUSINESS

See Minute No.47/12 with regard to Street Trading.

45/12 PARISH RECHARGES - ELECTIONS

The report was presented by Cllr Michael Wassell, Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Finance & Democratic Services, which debated the possibility of recouping the costs incurred by the District Council in the organisation of elections on behalf of Parish Councils. Sue Daniels, Electoral Services Manager was also present.

Concerns expressed by some Members were with regard to the percentage of increase which would be quite large for some parishes, and questioned if negotiations would take place with parishes, that some parishes may not want contested elections, and requested that communications with parishes were managed to enable clarity and understanding with them and not to conflict with Breckland Council. Cllr Wassell explained that there had been no communication with Town and Parish Clerks as yet, as it was not known whether the decision would be made to charge or not charge.

Whilst one Councillor stated his parish had decided there were very few contested elections, he believed the majority of parishes would brace themselves with regard to having to start paying for elections, and a lot would ring fence in future, another Councillor was very concerned with the proposal and explained that currently Thetford Town Council paid a very high precept which would need to be increased. Cllr Wassell stated that The Returning Officer was allowed to recoup all expenses for parish elections.

A Councillor commented that the proposal would bring the Authority inline with other districts.

RESOLVED that the General Purposes supported the proposal and that a report be submitted to Council.

RECOMMEND to Council that :

1. The proposal to pass on the full cost of Parish Council elections for 'ordinary elections' to the Parishes concerned be supported
2. Introduce a system of recharge for uncontested elections

46/12 LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE : 12 JULY 2012

RESOLVED to adopt the unconfirmed Minutes of the Local Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 12 July 2012.

47/12 STREET TRADING

The report which proposed a revision of existing street trading provisions and the extension of a street trading consent scheme to the whole district, was presented by Fiona Inston, Licensing and Business Support Manager. She advised that if the proposal was recommended, after the period of consultation a further report would be brought for consideration to the General Purposes Committee on 19 September, 2012.

A Councillor asked her if she was satisfied that renewal processes were as efficient as they should be, given the proposed annual renewal fee was only £7.73 less than the initial fee, to which she replied she was confident the process was as efficient as it could be.

A further question was asked with regard to there being any scope for street traders to come to Breckland Council for their inspection/renewal so that the fee could be reduced, which should be considered as the process needed to be as efficient as possible, to which she replied it could be considered as part of the consultation just as other comments received back from consultees would be the subject of further negotiation when the example was given of a six month option to the scheme so as not to discriminate against those who did not trade for 12 months of the year.

It was proposed that a Street Trading Consent Plate would be issued which must be clearly displayed on the vehicle, trailer or stall so as to be visible to the public, to which a Councillor asked what other areas undertook the same system. The Licensing and Business Support Manager stated it was a Breckland Council initiative which would use the technology and infrastructure already in place for taxi licensing.

She was asked what discussions if any, had taken place with neighbours to see what they proposed to do, as to obtain a wider standardised scheme across Norfolk could reduce the unit costs. She explained shared working discussions had taken place at sub groups and other local authorities were looking at the same type of proposed scheme.

It was asked if there was a possibility of having a reciprocal arrangement with other districts, especially when street traders lived on the border of three districts and the nature of their businesses were not restricted to one district. If Breckland Council did not inspect the street traders as they had been inspected by another authority, could there be a reduced licence fee, to which the Licensing and Business Support Manger said that legislation underpinned the proposals but she would look into the suggestion as part of the consultation.

The Chairman asked if the Authority owned any intellectual property

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rights on the processes and whether the fees could be “rounded up”.

If the proposed scheme was approved following Council on 25 October, 2012, street traders would have until 25 March 2013 to comply and enforcement action would be taken if they did not. Information would be available to view on the Public Register just as it was for taxis and licensed premises.

RESOLVED that all comments made by the General Purposes Committee are included in the consultation process.

RECOMMEND to Council that :

1. They approve in principle the designation of all streets in Breckland as ‘Consent Streets’ for the purposes of Street Trading
2. Agree the public consultation process as set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 6.10 of the report
3. Agree the draft Street Trading Standard Conditions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report as a basis for public consultation
4. Agree in principle an initial fee of £412.18 for a Street Trading Consent, with an annual renewal fee of £404.45 (subject to annual review)
5. Agree in principle that existing street trading restrictions in Thetford and Watton be rescinded should all streets in Breckland be designated as ‘Consent Streets’ for the purposes of Street Trading at a future meeting of the Council
6. Agree that all markets registered in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 be exempted from the need to obtain a Street Trading Consent
7. A further report be brought for consideration by Members following the completion of the formal public consultation process

48/12NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 19 September 2012 at 10.00 a.m in the Norfolk Room were noted.

49/12EXCLUSION 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 item 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.

50/12 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICE

Roger Wilkin, Interim Housing Manager presented the report which sought comments upon proposals to commence formal staff consultation on a proposed restructure of the service which would represent cost efficiencies, service effectiveness, be a more responsive service, and added that he was confident that service levels would be improved and the proposed new scheme could be delivered within the staffing contingent. Reports from the Business Development Team had been shared with Principal Officers.

The idea of higher customer satisfaction and a more efficient Housing Team was applauded. The Allocations Policy concerned one Councillor and questions were asked about out-of-hours services, foreign language assistance, interviews prior to going on the Housing Register and that the most vulnerable customers did not become casualties of efficiencies.

He clarified that “out-of-hours” was not fundamental to the proposal and if Members wished to set aside that issue to be looked at separately, it could be reviewed over the next few months.

RESOLVED that “out-of-hours” should be raised with Cabinet via the Executive Member for Planning and Environmental Services, as it was not for the General Purposes Committee to decide.

RESOLVED that it should be raised with Cabinet that an evaluation of past reviews be provided to ensure they have been monitored and had produced the results envisaged as well as being fit for purpose.

RECOMMEND to Council that they :

1. Approve the commencement of formal consultation with relevant employees concerning a proposed restructure of the service

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN