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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

Held on Tuesday, 9 October 2012 at 9.30 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

PRESENT

Mr J.W. Nunn (Chairman)	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr M. A. Wassell (Vice-Chairman)	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Councillor E. Gould	Mr W.H.C. Smith

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr T. J. Jermy
Mr C G Carter	Mr M J Nairn
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr P.J. Duigan	

In Attendance

Maxine O'Mahony	- Director of Commissioning
Kevin Rump	- ICT Project Manager
Darryl Smith	- Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Enabling)
Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer

Action By

108/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

109/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr I Sherwood who was attending the Conservative Conference.

110/12 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

111/12 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Messrs G Bambridge, C Carter, P Cowen, P Duigan, T Jermy, M Nairn and W Richmond were in attendance.

Action By

112/12 ALLOCATIONS POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Executive Member for Planning & Environmental Health presented the report. The new Policy would contribute to a better use of housing stock and provide a clear and transparent scheme which would remove false hope. The Policy would enable a more personal and stress free, streamlined process. By adopting a more realistic approach, the waiting list would be shortened and those that were removed from the list would be offered advice on alternative options.

The Executive Member then asked the Principal Housing Officer to explain a few technical points.

The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Enabling) had taken expert legal advice and in view of new case law emerging, following the introduction of the Localism Act, two minor and one major amendment were proposed to the Policy.

The two minor amendments were explained. They required:

- a) the addition of the words 'or non-qualifying' to the paragraph title at the top of page 15 of the report for applicants with no local connection; and
- b) the addition of the word 'or' after the first three bullet points under the title of Local connection on page 17, to clarify that only one of the criteria was needed to qualify for having local connection.

The more major amendment was required to address the reasonable preference given to the banding of applicants. An additional band needed to be added to cover applicants that did not have any reasonable preference. Those applicants would not be active applications on the housing register. Subject to those amendments, Members were asked to support the recommendation for the policy to be adopted by Council.

The Executive Member for Internal Services raised the following points:

- Was the Council responsible for the housing of 16 and 17 year olds?
 - that duty was with Social Services who acted in *loco parentis*, but Breckland assisted the County Council in finding accommodation for them.
- Would the changes to Benefits increase the number of Hostel places required?
 - there was likely to be an increase in people sharing accommodation in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) or in lodgings. Until the changes came in it was impossible to judge what impact that might have on the Housing scheme.
- How was the health and safety risk (referred to in the third bullet point on page 17) assessed?
 - the assessment would be made by a member of the Private Sector Housing Team but it was clarified that that would be on a re-active rather than pro-active basis. If applicants came to the

Action By

Council requiring a move because of poor conditions the property would be assessed, but the Council would not force people to move if they wanted to stay in unsuitable accommodation, although they might have to take action on the conditions.

- Why were unborn children not taken into consideration regarding overcrowding?
 - Until the baby was born the Council had no duty to provide a bedroom for it. Responses to overcrowding issues were similar to the condition of a property. If notified of a situation the Council would visit and take action if necessary.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission drew attention to the fact that the policy had been looked at in detail through the scrutiny process. The previous housing list had included people with no chance of being housed. That would be changed by the new Policy which required a close local connection. He was happy with the proposed amendments and endorsed the recommendation.

The Chairman drew attention to the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Commission at Agenda Item 10 and thanked the Task & Finish Group for their hard work.

Options

1. To recommend the policy for adoption
2. To propose changes to the policy and then recommend for adoption
3. To propose that the existing policy remains unchanged

Reasons

The changes which had been considered by the Task and Finish group would reduce the register considerably along with offering guidance to individuals who would be affected by the changes. The new policy created a local flavour of priority for areas that were important to Members such as giving additional priority to care leavers, families wishing to foster and adding in a strong local connection of 3 years before applicants could be considered for the housing register.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the Allocations Policy be adopted subject to the following amendments:

1. Section 3 – Eligibility heading **Notifying an ineligible customer** – amend to read **Notifying an ineligible or non-qualifying customer**
2. Section 4 – Assessment of Housing Need - add a fourth banding, under **Emergency, Gold** and **Silver** entitled **Applicants who do not have a reasonable preference**
3. Section 5 – Assessment of Applications under **Local Connection** - add the word **or** to the end of the first three bullet points.

Action By

113/12 ICT SHARED SERVICES (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Executive Member for Internal Services presented the report which proposed a shared service with Norfolk County Council for the delivery of ICT services.

Since the termination of the Steria contract a lot of work had been carried out to identify savings. An Independent Review had confirmed that the proposal was likely to provide up to 25% cost reductions, which could increase to 35% if there was full integration by both parties.

The proposal provided economy of scale and resilience. The service would be managed on an open-book basis, with monthly reviews. ICT service to ARP and the Breckland Council website were excluded from the proposal.

The proposal balanced efficiency and integration. Work was being carried out to provide robust governance arrangements which would include an exit strategy. A meeting would take place once a month to discuss any issues.

The proposed implementation date was 1 November 2012 and the Executive Member asked Scrutiny to review the contract in November 2013.

A meeting would be held with NCC to sort out the remaining problems, none of which were considered to be 'show stoppers'. Members were asked to support the recommendation.

The Deputy Leader noted that there were figures missing from the report at page 30 and the Executive Member acknowledged that the finer details were still being worked out.

The Interim ICT & Customer Services Manager apologised for the lack of figures and confirmed that the budget was expected to balance within the first two, to two and a half years.

The Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny said that the Commission would review progress in six months. He thought it was too long to wait for a full year. He asked what the acronym ITIL meant and was advised that it stood for Information Technology Infrastructure Library and was a standard for the delivery of ICT services.

The Chairman noted that the ICT team although small, delivered an excellent service and he hoped that that standard would be continued under the new arrangements.

In response to a question from the Executive Member for Planning and Environmental Health, it was confirmed that there would continue to be an on-site ICT staff presence at the Council offices although most support would be provided by remote assistance.

Options

1. Do nothing – Keep ICT in-house

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2. Enter Shared Services arrangement with Norfolk County Council
3. Share services with CPBS
4. Share services with West Suffolk

Reasons

1. There is a need to provide resilient services through staff and technology
2. We already have a good relationship with Norfolk County Council having used resources from NCC over the last 6 months.
3. There is a shared service already in motion. NCC providing staff to aid our day-to-day delivery and Breckland providing advice on the Video Conferencing implementation.
4. There is a vision of a platform for Norfolk at the strategic and political level

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that Shared Services arrangements with Norfolk County Council for the delivery of ICT services be approved.

114/12 DRAFT CALENDAR OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2013/14 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Options

1. To recommend the draft schedule of meetings for the Council's approval
2. To suggest amendments

Reasons

To comply with Standing Orders and the scheme of delegation for the recommendation to Council for adoption of a calendar of meetings for 2013-2014.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the schedule of Council and Committee meetings for 2013-2014 be approved.

115/12 REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The recommendation had been noted and taken into consideration during the discussion of Agenda Item 7.

116/12 ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Executive Member for Internal Services advised that the new Benefits system and the localisation of Council Tax was taking a lot of officer time. He thought that Members might require some training when those changes were introduced.

The Minutes were noted.

Action By

**117/12 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL (FOR INFORMATION)
(AGENDA ITEM 12)**

The Minutes were noted.

118/12 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 20th November 2012 at 9.30am in the Norfolk Room were noted.

119/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 14)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) 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 likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**120/12 PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE OF HOUSING SERVICE (AGENDA
ITEM 15)**

The Executive Member for Planning and Environmental Services introduced the report which had previously been presented to Cabinet in July.

A staff consultation had been carried out on the proposed revised structure contained within Appendix 1 to the report. Following the receipt of comments the revised structure at Appendix 2 to the report had been circulated for further consultation.

The difference between the two structures, in staff numbers and financial terms, was discussed.

Options

1. To approve the revised structure
2. Not to approve the revised structure

Reasons

The recommendation was in line with the spirit and letter of the Council's redundancy policy.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Housing Service Restructure set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 10.12 am

CHAIRMAN