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## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

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

### **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Held on Thursday, 22 November 2012 at 2.00 pm in  
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

#### **PRESENT**

Mr P.J. Duigan (Chairman)	Mr B J Skull
Mr T R Carter (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mrs B Canham	Mr D.R. Williams JP
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mrs E. M. Jolly (Substitute Member)

#### **Also Present**

Mr M. S. Robinson	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mrs L.S. Turner	

#### **In Attendance**

Lucy Hohnen	- Interim Head of Human Resources
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Riana Rudland	- Community Development Manager
Mark Stanton	- Economic Development Manager
Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
Lindy Warner	- Senior Economic Development Officer

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#### **63/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **64/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G Bambridge, Mr C Clark, Mr S Green and Mrs S Matthews.

Mrs E Jolly was in attendance as a Substitute.

Apologies from Mr B Borrett, who had been unavoidably detained, were received immediately following the meeting.

#### **65/12 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

For the sake of transparency Mrs A Steward declared an interest in the Economic Development item as a Cabinet Member of Norfolk

County Council.

**66/12 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None.

**67/12 ADOPTION LEAVE POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

The Interim Head of Human Resources presented the report which sought to bring the pay entitlements of the Adoption Leave Policy into line with the Maternity Leave Policy. There were no other changes to the policy. She noted that there had only been one claim for Adoption Leave in the last seven years.

Mr Williams (as Chairman of the Local Joint Consultative Committee) said that the LJCC had supported the recommendation and the report had been well received.

**RESOLVED** to approve the introduction of an additional Occupational Adoption Pay provision to mirror the Occupational Maternity Pay provision of 90% of a week's pay for week 1-6 and 50% of a week's pay for week 7-18 (plus statutory adoption pay).

**68/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

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

**69/12 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE - NEW WAY OF WORKING (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Economic Development Manager presented the report which set out a new way of working designed to reduce the cost of the service over the next two years with the aim of becoming cost-neutral by 2015/16. The report had previously been presented to Cabinet to enable a funding bid which was time critical.

Mr Williams (as Chairman of LJCC) noted that they had been informed that the funding was aimed at business rather than communities.

Mrs Steward congratulated the Economic Development Team and then raised various questions and received the following responses:

- The relationship of Economic Development to the Thetford

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- Growth Point team was clarified.
- There were five Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in the eastern region. Four of those would be involved in the new project and would help by identifying suitable businesses in their areas.
  - Although more people would be involved in the project there would be an actual reduction in the number of staff employed by Breckland Council.

Mrs Jolly asked how the project's progress would be monitored and was advised that a report would be made to the Audit Committee each year to check savings. It would also be monitored by Senior Management through the Performance System.

Mrs Jolly was concerned about the 'up-front' costs for the Council and the risks if the project did not progress.

It was explained that there was very little risk as even redundancy costs were claimable within the project.

In response to a further question by Mrs Steward regarding engagement with schools the Senior Economic Development Officer said that they were working as closely as they could with schools and other agencies which delivered into schools. They had tried to set up an apprentice scheme but that had failed. However, they were working with the CITB regarding future construction apprenticeships with local businesses and were also trying to work with Norwich City College.

**RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that Option 1 of the report be approved.

**70/12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report which followed on from the December 2011 restructure which had been through the LJCC and General Purposes Committees. There had been a number of changes since then to how the service was provided. These included changes to CCTV, Grants and the Pride Agenda. There was also a new Shared Service Manager in post.

Members had been very supportive of the work of the team and keen to receive a progress review. That provided an opportunity to review the structure.

Mr Williams (as Chairman of LJCC) said that they had supported the leaner structure.

Mrs Canham agreed that cuts had to be made and supported what the Council was trying to do, but she was concerned at the potential loss of skills.

The Community Development Manager advised that all the functions would still be covered and the changes to the structure would result in only one redundancy as opposed to two in the previous proposal.

The Chairman noted that some posts were not part of the review and it was explained that some forms and functions were not changing.

The Executive Member for Localism, Community and Environmental Services said that the responses from the Could We Should We consultation had been taken into account when considering the changes. The use of multi-skilled officers would enable delivery of a wider range of services.

Mrs Chapman-Allen asked various questions about the Community Safety team which the Community Development Manager answered.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:**

- (1) the revised structure at Appendix B be approved; and
- (2) formal consultation with staff should proceed.

As a result of concerns raised at the LJCC meeting Mr Williams asked that letters to affected staff be sent out promptly and the Deputy Chief Executive assured him that they would.

#### **71/12 LEGAL SERVICES REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The Executive Member for Finance and Democratic Services explained the background to the report. The initial review had been completed at the end of 2011 with a preferred option of a shared legal service with South Holland. That proposal had not been supported by South Holland.

The need to realise savings remained and further work had been completed. A fundamental change to the service was proposed.

Mr Williams noted that the report had not been presented to LJCC and the Deputy Chief Executive explained that that was because it affected less than five members of staff.

Mrs Chapman-Allen raised various concerns, many of which she had previously raised when the report was presented to Cabinet. She asked if Legal Services had been asked to make savings and it was confirmed that they had not.

Mr Carter was concerned about the risks if the new service was not

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fit for purpose.

Mrs Jolly asked how the effectiveness of the change could be monitored and was advised that all projects were subject to the Performance Management procedures. The Assistant Director for Democratic Services would be ultimately accountable.

Mr Williams was concerned that quasi-judicial committees depended on good legal advice as members were liable for the decisions they made. The wrong advice could lead to increased costs. It would be of paramount importance to ensure that the person procuring that advice had the necessary qualities.

The Chairman thought that it would be very important to give clear guidance to all service managers on how to access legal services in future. He also asked who would monitor the service and was advised that it would be monitored by the scrutiny process and through the Performance Plus system.

Mr Williams requested that LJCC should also receive a monitoring report.

**RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that:

- 1) the proposed structure for Legal Services as detailed in the report be approved; and
- 2) the Assistant Director of Democratic Services proceed with conducting a 30 day staff consultation on the proposed changes detailed within the report.

**72/12NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 9 January 2013 were noted.

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm

CHAIRMAN