

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**Held on Thursday, 22 November 2012 at 10.00 am in
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Employers' Side

Mr D.R. Williams JP (Chairman)
Mr K. Martin
Mrs S.M. Matthews
Dr Z. Waterford (Vice-Chairman)

Staff Side

Mr J. Heaton (Substitute Member)
Ms S. Smith
Mr D. Wilder
Mr M J Nairn (Substitute Member)

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
Robert Walker	- Assistant Director of Commissioning
Lindy Warmer	- Senior Economic Development Officer

56/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

57/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Kybird and Mrs S Owen.

58/12 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Mrs S Smith declared an interest in Agenda Item 10 as a member of the Economic Development Team.

59/12 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Nothing to report.

60/12 LEGISLATION UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Nothing to report.

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**61/12 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & LICENSING RESTRUCTURE
(AGENDA ITEM 7)**

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The Assistant Director of Commissioning provided an update on the revised structure which had been agreed through the Committee process. This was a shared service with South Holland with each Council retaining a front facing officer team. The review had resulted in five compulsory redundancies, four of whom had been happy to go. The fifth had been a contract employee.

It was now about six months since the recruitment process. The target was to realise £125,000 savings each year. It looked likely that there would be a £10,000 shortfall in the current year, but it was expected that the target would be exceeded in subsequent years.

Unison had submitted a collective grievance which had been dealt with. The proposal had introduced a bar in the salary for Grade 8 employees to differentiate roles and responsibilities. That bar had been removed but other aspects of the grievance had not been upheld. Affected staff should have been informed by letter. There had been a delay in the distribution of those letters for which the Assistant Director apologised to Unison and to affected staff.

This had been the first shared service review. It had been a big and difficult process and much had been learnt along the way. Those lessons had been used in other reviews.

The IT element of the new structure had also been delayed but there were no cost implications. It was acknowledged that the team had worked well during the upheaval and transition period and were continuing to do so whilst the new IT was awaited. It was a credit to the team that standards remained high and no complaints had been received about a reduction in service.

Savings had been made and work was progressing to get the IT in place to support the new structure.

Mrs Matthews asked what had caused the IT delay.

The Assistant Director explained that the IT was being joined with South Holland and there were issues caused by the distance between the two teams and the different infrastructure involved. A new 'pipe' was now in place between Dereham and Spalding. The challenge would be to ensure that the system worked equally well across both Councils.

The IT would be hosted at Breckland and South Holland needed to be able to access that without accessing other Breckland

systems and vice-versa. The ICT was therefore not straight forward but it was expected to be in place by the end of the financial year.

Mr Martin asked what had caused the delay to the letters. It seemed to have been caused by a lack of communication between departments and the Assistant Director for Commissioning and the Interim Head of Human Resources both agreed to chase the matter.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director of Commissioning for his update and for the apology.

62/12 PERFORMANCE RELATED PAY (AGENDA ITEM 12)

This item was brought forward on the Agenda by the Chairman.

The Vice-Chairman explained the background to the report. The Performance Related Pay scheme had been in operation since 2007. There were a number of issues with the scheme which was not considered to be fair or transparent. The awarding system was too subjective and was not implemented uniformly. These concerns had been brought up at every pay negotiation with Human Resources (HR) without reconciliation. She thought it was time to bring the matter to the attention of a wider audience and had put the report on the agenda as the LJCC had been set up to consider staffing matters.

She was requesting a review of the system and for Unison to be involved in that review to achieve consensus, with a view to having a new system in place for 2013.

She proposed that Unison and all staff should be involved at an early stage in considering a new pay scheme. The current system was not motivational and was not good for staff morale.

The Chairman asked for a comment from the staff side representative and Mrs Smith agreed that the system should be reviewed.

The Chairman said that he had spoken to the Portfolio holder and evidence was being sought to explain why the current system was not working.

The Assistant Director of Commissioning had submitted a written response on behalf of Human Resources, the Corporate Management Team and the Chief Executive. He had been surprised by the report on the agenda. He agreed with Unison and staff that the system needed to be reviewed. The level of award was significantly different now to when the scheme had been set up and the context within which it was operating had

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changed significantly.

The review had already started and Unison and staff would be consulted at the appropriate time. A new scheme would not be put forward as a *fait accompli*. When the new scheme was ready it would be brought to the appropriate Committees.

He wished to make the point that although CMT and Human Resources agreed that a review was needed they were not agreeing with the comments about fairness at the current time.

With regard to the comments about inconsistency of implementation, he assured Members that CMT took those very seriously and he was grateful to Unison for bringing them to their attention. He would meet with Unison to resolve those matters and that would be done under the delegated powers of the Chief Executive, as that was not an appropriate matter for LJCC. However, if Unison and staff were unsatisfied by the Chief Executive's decision the matter could then be considered by the Committee.

He concluded by saying that no decision was needed from the LJCC. The matter of inconsistencies would be looked at by the Chief Executive and the review was already underway and Unison would be consulted.

Mr Martin asked if the current scheme had been running smoothly and the Vice-Chairman said that in Unison's view it had not. It was a difficult issue because people did not want to speak up against their Managers. She was aware that different Managers implemented the scheme differently. It was not a transparent system. It was based on the premise that if you performed well you would get extra money, but if too many people performed well that was not the case. It was demotivational for staff. Unison had protested every year and she felt that they should be involved in the review from day one, including being involved in the process of gathering evidence.

The Chairman agreed that Unison should be involved with the new process but thought that HR needed to capture the evidence first and then approach Unison to investigate the issues. Without evidence he could not support a change to the system.

The Assistant Director of Commissioning said there was a clear process; targets were set, reviewed and then rated. It was a subjective process but evidence based. All Managers should follow that process. If they did not, that would be addressed. He did not think that the process was bad but agreed that it should be followed consistently. If targets were not set properly that would need to be investigated.

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The Chairman noted that the process was not achieving what it had set out to do as financial restraints were affecting the system and there was no money to reward staff.

The Assistant Director noted that its purpose had been to drive performance and improvement. If that was not happening it did need to be addressed.

The Vice-Chairman pointed out that the Assistant Director had acknowledged that staff had maintained standards despite the lack of financial reward. She said that was because of professional pride. Money was not the motivator. Evidence would be difficult to provide, but from her own experience she had no objectives, no targets and had not had an appraisal. The system had failed and was not working.

Mr Wilder said that transparency was part of the problem. Staff heard rumours about rewards but there was no general information about the success of the scheme.

The Assistant Director said it was not acceptable if staff were not being properly appraised. With regard to transparency and evidence he said that Managers met with officers, set targets and then assessed performance based on evidence. The Manager then rated the officer's performance and the officer had the opportunity to make comments on that rating. The results were fed through to HR and CMT for an audit check. It was not HR's job to review the evidence but they worked with CMT to ensure balanced reward across the organisation.

The Vice-Chairman noted that HR were involved in the moderation panel which did look at the evidence, but that Unison were not.

The Chairman decided not to take the recommendations, but to wait for the review report to come to the Committee. He hoped that Unison would be consulted at the earliest opportunity.

The Assistant Director said that the preliminary work had started with a view to introducing a change for the next financial year. CMT would meet with Unison to discuss any issues of inconsistency and they would be addressed under delegated powers.

63/12 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 11)

This item was also moved up the agenda by the Chairman, as the Deputy Chief Executive had to leave early to attend another meeting.

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The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report, but the Community Services Manager was in attendance to answer questions.

The revised structure was based on an earlier proposal which Members had been keen to track the progress of. There had been a number of changes across the Council and various factors had affected the service, including Shared Services, CCTV, etc. A new structure, which was different in terms of establishment levels but retained fundamental services, was proposed.

The Community Services Manager said that as a new Manager she had taken on a partially implemented structure with some posts vacant and other officers moving on soon. Although she was proposing some fundamental differences with the new structure, the overall result would be only one redundancy rather than two under the previous proposal.

Mrs Smith pointed out that in the structure one post was shown as Part Time but that was not included in the job description.

In response to a question from Mr Wilder it was confirmed that posts would only be advertised externally if they could not be filled internally.

The Chairman noted that this matter would be debated fully at the General Purposes meeting in the afternoon.

AGREED to support the recommendation.

64/12 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE - NEW WAY OF WORKING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Chairman explained that this report had already been presented to Cabinet for their approval to submit a funding bid which was time critical.

The Economic Development Manager then presented the report which sought to introduce new ways of working aimed at reducing costs over the next two years and moving towards the service becoming cost-neutral. It would also better align the service to support growth.

There were opportunities to generate income. The European Funding, if secured, could make the service more effective and reduce costs. New posts within the proposed structure would be 100% externally funded.

The Vice-Chairman advised that Unison had had a very

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informative and productive meeting with the Economic Development Manager and supported the proposals.

The Chairman asked if it would be possible to provide bid-writing training to communities and was advised that the funding being sought was aimed at businesses rather than communities and therefore the bid process was not the same. However, the team did provide advice to other services that supported communities in their bids. They had also helped other authorities and had been able to charge for their advice in those cases.

The Deputy Chief Executive asked if the external funding would cover all costs in case of project failure and it was confirmed that redundancy costs could legitimately be claimed as part of the project funding.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** that the recommendations as set out in the report be approved.

65/12 ADOPTION LEAVE POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Interim Head of Human Resources presented the report and advised that the existing Policy did not match the Maternity Policy, so the changes were being made to bring the two into line and to match the financial entitlement for parents.

The Vice-Chairman said that Unison had discussed and wholeheartedly endorsed the change.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** 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 weeks 1-6 and 50% of a week's pay for weeks 7-18 (plus statutory adoption pay).

66/12 BRECKLAND COUNCIL EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Interim Head of Human Resources presented the report which informed Members of the Council's intention to join the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). South Holland already had the scheme in place. It made lots of information and services available to staff including counselling, either over the phone or face-to-face, and financial advice. It was a far reaching service which could address issues before they affected productivity. It would also cost less than was currently spent on providing counselling and would provide increased confidentiality.

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The Vice-Chairman asked if there was any limit on the number of requests that the Council could make and was advised that there was a limit of five requests for face-to-face counselling. However, if more were needed the Council would cover that cost.

In that case the Vice-Chairman said that Unison would welcome it as an addition to what was already available.

The Chairman agreed that it was a good thing and would help people to help themselves.

The report was noted.

67/12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 13)

None.

68/12 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 14)

As the next meeting date was only three weeks away the Chairman agreed that it should be cancelled due to lack of business. The next scheduled meeting would be held on 14 February 2013, however if any matters came to light in the meantime a special meeting could be arranged.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN