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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday, 29 May 2013 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

PRESENT

Mr P.J. Duigan (Chairman)	Mr C. S. Clark
Mr T R Carter (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr B J Skull
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mrs A.L. Steward

In Attendance

Neil Fordham	- Payroll and Reward Manager
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
Vicky Thomson	- Assistant Director - Democratic Services
Robert Walker	- Assistant Director of Commissioning
Richard Wills	- Breckland Training Services Manager

Action By

27/13 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

It was noted that the recommendation at Minute No 25/13 had been amended at Council to include the word 'Policy'.

Subject to that amendment, the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28/13 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Borrett, Mr Stasiak and Mr Williams.

29/13 LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE : 16 MAY 2013 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Minutes of the LJCC meeting held on 16 May 2013 had been tabled and Members given time to read them before the meeting commenced.

The recommendation at Minute No 18/13 would be taken into consideration when Agenda Item 7 was discussed.

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the LJCC meeting held on 16 May 2013 be adopted.

30/13 PRP SCHEME AND PAY AWARD 2013/14 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Assistant Director for Commissioning presented the report which sought approval for the PRP and pay awards for 2013/14.

Staff pay had not been uplifted since 2009 and no cost of living awards had been made either. It was proposed that the awards would have two elements; a one percent basic performance increase and a further performance related pay award of one percent for staff rated as exceptional, and 0.5 percent for staff rated as overachieving. Awards would be effective from 1 April 2013 if agreed.

Unison was happy with the proposals and the recommendations had been supported by the LJCC.

Councillor Clark asked how 'exceptional' and 'overachieving' were gauged and was advised that the staff appraisal process set targets at the start of the year which were reviewed after six months and then graded by line managers. Scores were then moderated by the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Commissioning to ensure they were consistent across the organisation.

The Chairman suggested that the PRP Policy needed to be reviewed and asked why there were grades 3A and 3B. It was explained that the A and B gradings were historic and had related to special responsibilities, but that they were no longer applicable.

Councillor Steward asked whether the entire budget of £64,000 had been allocated for the awards and it was confirmed that there had been a surplus of between £7-8,000.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) a Basic Performance Increase of 1% of their salary be awarded to staff;
- (2) an increase of 0.5% of their salary be awarded to staff for being rated Overachieving;
- (3) an increase of 1% of their salary be awarded to staff for being rated Exceptional;
- (4) pay scales (minimum and maximums) be uplifted by 1.0% (as per Appendix A);
- (5) the process and eligibility guidelines be agreed (as per Appendix C); and
- (6) the Basic Performance Increase (BPI) and PRP awards be reviewed and renegotiated in a year's time with renegotiated terms to be implemented in April 2014.

31/13 BRECKLAND TRAINING SERVICES (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Breckland Training Services Manager gave Members a verbal update.

In June 2013 approval had been granted to increase the team by one member of staff to enable the design, delivery and marketing of workshops to outside organisations. The post was to be funded by the income generated from that work. To date £14,000 of income had been achieved and a further £29,000 worth of work was confirmed for the future. By the end of October, the Training Service would have exceeded its target of £40,000.

Current clients of the service were South Holland District Council, Luton Borough Council and the ARP. Work had also been done in partnership with the UEA. Discussions were taking place with North Norfolk, Waveney, Suffolk Coastal and St Edmundsbury Councils.

The Breckland Training Service (BTS) had recently hosted an event for the Local Government Association (LGA), running an apprentice style challenge which would be reported in the MJ magazine and should generate good publicity for the BTS.

24 October 2013 would mark the first anniversary of the BTS and a report would be presented to the Committee at that time setting out the future plans for the BTS, which included looking into the creation of a trading arm.

Councillor Bambridge acknowledged that the BTS was currently restricted and could only recover costs. He asked three questions:

- What work was being sought outside the Breckland 'family' of local authorities?
- Was the aim to provide training for businesses as well?
- Was the Service affecting other training establishments in the District?

The Breckland Training Services Manager advised that the BTS prospectus was being sent out to all east of England local authorities and to others further afield as well. However, the best form of advertisement was by word of mouth. Partnerships with the UEA and the LGA had helped and Stockton Borough Council had heard about the Service in that way and expressed an interest.

Discussions were taking place with Wayland Business Forum about setting up an academy for small businesses providing IT, presentation and social media skills. Other local training providers would be used to help deliver that service.

Action By

The key products of BTS were not offered by anyone else. The main competitor was Broadland Training Services and they offered NVQ and accredited sessions. It was not the intention of BTS to be in competition with other providers but rather to work in partnership with them.

Councillor Bambridge congratulated the BTS Manager on how far the Service had come already.

Councillor Steward agreed but thought that the opportunity was being missed to use Members to promote what was being offered. Members had links with other organisations and could expand the network of contacts. She also cautioned against working with just one local business forum and advised that a more cohesive approach was needed.

Councillor Carter thought that a lot of progress had been made in the first six months and that the Service would grow and develop. He encouraged the BTS Manager to keep 'tweeting' as it was a good way of publicising the Service.

The report was noted.

32/13 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 17 July 2013 were noted.

The Chairman asked for an item on the secondment process to be put on the next Agenda following concerns raised about whether the Policy was fit for purpose.

33/13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 10)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) 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 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

34/13 LEGAL SERVICES REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Assistant Director of Democratic Services presented the report which was being brought back to the Committee following a challenge on the process, to ensure that there could be no uncertainty over whether due process had been followed and to prevent further challenge.

The report proposed the same model for legal provision as agreed in November 2012 and was aimed at realising savings.

Action By

Consultation with staff had been completed and all concerns considered and addressed and no changes had been made as a result.

Members raised various questions about the role of the Legal Services Co-ordinator and the way that the budget would be distributed. Concerns were raised about the potential risks, but it was made clear that by accessing specialist advice those risks would be reduced and if incorrect advice was provided the Council could potentially recover any costs incurred.

Councillor Steward said that a more transparent process was needed in terms of cost allocation within Legal Services it also needed to be a quick and streamlined process that would be faster, to ensure the Council received an appropriate and timely level of advice. The Deputy Chief Executive wholeheartedly agreed. He said that speed was important. The ethos of the report was to be more commercially focussed. With the right Legal Services Coordinator in post it would be possible to measure value for money.

In response to concerns about how the new process would be monitored it was agreed that the Committee would receive a verbal update in six months and a more detailed report within twelve months, setting out how much money each department was having to spend on legal advice.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the proposed structure for Legal Services as detailed within the report be approved; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to implement and make any associated redundancies resulting from the structure.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am

CHAIRMAN