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## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

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

### **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Held on Wednesday, 27 November 2013 at 10.00 am 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)	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr D.R. Williams JP
Mr R.F. Goreham	Mr R. R. Richmond (Substitute Member)

#### **In Attendance**

Phil Adams	- Public Protection Manager
Sue Daniels	- Electoral Services Manager
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Alison Peart	- Interim Senior HR Advisor

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#### **58/13 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **59/13 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chapman-Allen, Clark and Matthews. Councillor R Richmond was present as Substitute for Councillor Matthews.

#### **60/13 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - WATTON (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report which considered a request from Watton Town Council to reduce their number of Councillors from 15 to 13. The Council had a statutory duty to consider the request. If approved, it was proposed to use a 'light touch' approach, posting notices on the Council's website and in Watton Town Hall. It was not expected that the review would have any cost implications.

The motivation behind the request was to align with Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC) recommendations and ensure that the Town Council was able to be active in the community.

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Councillor Williams was concerned that there would be a cost to the Council at a time when it was trying to keep costs down. The public would not appreciate money being wasted on what was only a miniscule reduction. He also pointed out that there would be Parish elections in only 18 months.

The Electoral Services Manager advised that even if 15 Councillors were not elected there would be still be a requirement for the Town Council to co-opt as they could not reduce their ratio without a Community Governance Review.

Councillor Borrett wondered whether Swaffham would be next as they had the same ratio. He thought that there would be a cost to the Council as there was a lot to do. He asked if a contribution could be sought from the Town Council but was advised that it was the District Council's statutory responsibility. He suggested that the boundary should be sorted out first to address the Carbrooke anomaly before the number of Councillors was reviewed.

The Electoral Services Manager explained that the Council was required to carry out a full Community Governance Review every 12 to 15 years. The last one had been in 2002 and so it would soon be time to start that process. The review would look at boundaries and the number of Councillors. However, any Councils that had been reviewed within the last two years could not be changed.

Councillor Steward thought that other towns and parishes might come forward for review and she was concerned about the cost. She also felt that a notice in the Town Hall and on the website was not enough. There should be a notice in the local paper.

It was pointed out that that would add to the costs.

**RESOLVED** that the review be deferred until the full District-wide review was carried out.

The Chairman noted that all parishes should be given advance notice of the District-wide review to give them time to consider their options. The Electoral Services Manager said that she would inform Members of the timetable for that review as soon as it was known.

**61/13 ADOPTION OF A REVISED 'PROCEDURES POLICY' IN RELATION TO THE LOCAL LAND & PROPERTY GAZETTEER INCORPORATING STREET NAMING & NUMBERING (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Public Protection Manager presented the revised procedures policy for street naming and number which had originally been adopted in 2009. The Council had a legal responsibility to regularly review and improve its street naming and numbering service.

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The changes listed at 1.7 of the report were highlighted and each one was clarified.

Councillor Bambridge did not like the idea of preferred lists. Parishes held strong opinions and full account should be taken of local views. He also thought that linking the names of properties was acceptable.

The Public Protection Manager advised that the preferred list would be supplied by the parish and could be updated by them as required. The linking of names caused problems for the emergency services and the aim was to avoid that in future.

The Chairman acknowledged that problem and quoted an example in Dereham where there was a Wright Road, Wright Way and Wright Avenue. They often got confused.

Councillor Borrett said that people felt strongly about names which were often integral to the place. He acknowledged the problems for the emergency services but pointed out that linked names could give a clue to the location. He was confused about the rule of names not starting with 'The' or ending in an 's'.

Councillor Carter agreed and said that some names went back hundreds of years, such as 'The Street'.

Councillor Steward asked if there was money in the budget for the repair/renewal of name plates. The Public Protection Manager confirmed that the Council had a legal responsibility to do that and that part of the policy had not changed.

Councillor Williams agreed with the other speakers. A road name change in his Ward had caused problems. He suggested that the parish councils needed to be informed in good time to meet the ten day deadline.

The Public Protection Manager noted that road names were only changed for really good reasons usually following a request from the parish council or emergency services. He acknowledged that the ten day deadline caused problems, which was one of the reasons for introducing the list as it gave the parish time to consider names they would like to be used.

It was noted that developments took a long time to reach fruition and it might be a good idea to start thinking about a name for a new road when the parish council was consulted on the planning application.

The Public Protection Manager agreed that the earlier a name could be sorted out the better. Developers needed a postal address to put utilities onto a site.

Councillor Borrett said that the role of the Ward Representative was

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not included in the procedures. They should have a more defined role as they were available all year, whereas it had been noted that some parishes were very small and met infrequently. He also felt that the changes should be guidance only, not mandatory. The key thing was to inject common sense into whether a name should be allowed or not.

The Chairman thought that the procedures should be amended to say that Ward Members would be consulted. He asked how prescriptive the policy was and who would make the decision in case of conflict.

The Public Protection Manager advised that generally such decisions were made in discussions between officers and the Portfolio Holder.

Members felt that the Ward Representative should be involved or that the matter should be determined by Committee if there was a problem.

Councillor Goreham agreed that Ward Members should be informed. He suggested that the old document should be kept and the new document added 'for consideration' but not as definitive guidance.

The Public Protection Manager explained that the changes had been put forward because of existing problems.

Councillor Williams thought it needed to be made easier to understand and suggested it should include a summary. The Public Protection Manager advised that there would be a Question and Answer section on the website referring to the relevant sections of the document.

It was clarified that names could be used but there was a need to be mindful and ensure that families were aware.

**RESOLVED** to defer the policy for amendments including the requirement for early notification of parishes and consultation with Ward Representatives.

**62/13SECONDMENT (ITEM 8)**

The Interim Senior HR Advisor presented the report as the Human Resources Manager had sent her apologies.

The report had been written at the request of the Assistant Director of Commissioning to look at the amount of secondments and whether they posed any risks.

There had only been four secondments in the last two years. The majority had been by staff from the Contact Centre. There was an element of frustration that staff were being employed and trained to

**Action By**

work in the Contact Centre and were then leaving. To overcome that problem it was suggested that a policy be written giving clear guidance on who could apply for secondment.

Councillor Carter acknowledged that secondments could cause disruption to service. In his previous profession as a schoolteacher he had done research which had proven the need for a firm policy with specific restrictions. Very large organisations could cope with secondments, but generally he felt there was little benefit for smaller organisations.

Councillor Williams thought that progress in development should be reflected in the secondment. He asked if Unison had been consulted. It was confirmed that they would be consulted through the LJCC.

Councillor Borrett agreed that a policy was needed and asked for it to be presented to the Committee when it had been written.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) HR be commissioned to draft a Secondment Policy for application across the authority, which placed limitations on when an employee could undertake a secondment, relating to the length of time in their substantive role; and
- (2) The Council continued to use secondments, as and when the need arose, within the parameters of the Secondment Policy.

**63/13 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 8 January 2014 were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN