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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Held on Wednesday, 12 November 2014 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr P.J. Duigan (Chairman)	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr T R Carter (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr R.F. Goreham	Mr D.R. Williams JP
Mrs S.M. Matthews	Mr R. R. Richmond (Substitute Member)
Mrs K. Millbank	

Also Present

Mr R Atterwill - Chairman, Swanton Morley Parish Council

In Attendance

Sue Daniels	- Electoral Services Manager
Josie Hoven	- Licensing Officer
Helen McAleer	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Team Leader

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43/14 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Millbank to her first meeting as a member of the Committee.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44/14 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Borrett, Chapman-Allen and Skull. Councillor Robert Richmond was present as Substitute for Councillor Skull.

The Executive Member for Democratic Services and Public Protection had also sent his apologies.

45/14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

No declarations were made.

46/14 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

47/14 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Mr Roger Atterwill, Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council was in attendance. The Chairman agreed to allow him to speak on Agenda Items 8 and 9.

48/14 REQUEST FOR AMENDMENTS TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING PROCEDURES (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Licensing Officer presented the report which sought permission to change the conditions which the Council had discretionary powers to apply to licences.

Currently only road wheels supplied by vehicle manufacturers were approved as spare wheels. However, many modern vehicles were being manufactured with only puncture repair kits provided, or with run flat tyres.

To allow those newer vehicles to be included in the licensed fleet it was proposed that the conditions be amended. It was noted that the omission of a spare wheel reduced the weight of a vehicle and therefore improved its fuel consumption.

RESOLVED that the Breckland Council Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Procedures be amended to include spare wheels, space saver wheels, inflation devices and run flat tyres as set out at Appendix B to the report.

49/14 REQUEST FOR AMENDMENTS TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING PROCEDURES (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Licensing Officer presented the report and requested an amendment to the recommendation. The report had originally been presented to the Appeals Committee where the proposals had been supported. Members were asked to ratify that approval.

The Council had received a request from an operator of high class, executive vehicles used predominantly for chauffeur hire for an exemption from the requirement to display a rear identification plate. It was proposed that in such cases an identification sticker should be applied to the front and rear windows of the vehicle instead. Other authorities had already adopted such a practice.

Councillor Carter accepted the proposal for executive type vehicles but not for taxis and it was clarified that the exemption would apply to executive Private Hire vehicles only and not to Hackney Carriages.

The Chairman suggested an amendment to the wording of the recommendation to ensure that the exemption was controlled by changing the word 'predominantly' to 'solely'.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) exemption from displaying a rear identification plate for executive Private Hire Vehicles used solely for chauffeur hire be approved; and
- (2) the display of front and rear window, formal identification stickers be required in such vehicles.

50/14 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the report which had been prepared following the publication of the Local Government Boundary Commission's final recommendations on their review of the District.

It had been necessary to review the Polling Districts to align them with the new Wards as the Electoral Registers were produced from those Districts. The majority remained unchanged; Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford being the most effected.

Mr Atterwill was invited to comment. He wished to pass on an observation made at a recent Parish Council meeting. They had been notified that Parishes would now have to cover a sizeable amount of the cost of elections and that might prompt a big increase in the charge to the Council for the hire of village halls for Polling Stations. He suggested that that should be borne in mind when budgets were calculated.

Councillor Stasiak asked if that meant that the Council would be charged more than the usual day rate, hire cost for a venue and Mr Atterwill confirmed that it might.

The Democratic Services Team Leader pointed out that such costs would be re-charged to the Parish Council.

Councillor Williams noted that it was not always the Parish Council that controlled Polling Station venues some were managed by Charities and Trusts and he thought it would be unfair for them to have to pay extra.

Councillor Goreham did not have a problem with the Polling Stations

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proposed for Dereham but he thought it would cause confusion and people would not know where they were meant to vote. The Council needed to look at ways to disseminate the information about the changes. With regard to Scarning, he pointed out the village hall was a long way from the majority of electors and he thought a more realistic alternative should be sought.

The Democratic Services Team Leader advised that the school had refused to allow the use of its building as a Polling Station.

Councillor Millbank suggested that it would save money if the two Toftwood Polling Stations opposite each other were combined in one venue, but the Democratic Services Team Leader pointed out that that would mean that over 4000 electors would be using one building which might cause delays. In view of that Councillor Millbank thought that it would be better to split the electorate more evenly as one Polling Station only had 395 electors.

Councillor Goreham agreed and thought that it indicated that the Wards had not been split properly if the geographic mass was so uneven.

Other similar examples were discussed, such as Attleborough where two stations were only a few hundred yards apart and Swaffham where elderly electors had problems reaching their allocated Polling Station but another Station was within walking distance.

It was pointed out that Polling Stations were in the remit of the Returning Officer not the Committee. That was further complicated by the fact that part of the District including Swaffham, Watton and Thetford fell within South Norfolk Parliamentary District and their Polling Stations would be in the remit of the Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Returning Officer for the May 2015 elections.

Members raised various concerns about that including cost and risk, with ballot boxes being transported to King's Lynn and back to Dereham. The Chairman thought that Members needed more information on the roles of the Returning Officers at the next election and said that he would speak to the Executive Member for Democratic Services & Public Protection to discuss how to address that need.

Councillor Goreham returned to the disparity in the distribution of the East and West Toftwood Wards. He could not understand why there was such imbalance.

The Chairman thought it had been caused back in 2002 when the Wards had been changed. He then read out comments sent from the Executive Member Democratic Services & Public Protection as he was unable to attend.

RESOLVED that:

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- (1) the creation of six new polling districts in Dereham
 - Neatherd Ward (Dereham Neatherd East & Dereham Neatherd West)
 - Toftwood Ward (Dereham Toftwood West & Dereham Toftwood East)
 - Withburga Ward (Dereham Withburga North & Dereham Withburga South);

- (2) the creation of ten new polling districts in Thetford
 - Boudica Ward (Thetford Anne Bartholomew and Thetford Boudica)
 - Burrell Ward (Thetford Burrell North and Thetford Burrell South)
 - Castle Ward (Thetford Castle East and Thetford Castle West)
 - Priory Ward (Thetford Priory East, Thetford Priory West, Thetford Priory South and Thetford Vicarage Road); and

- (3) the revised polling districts in Attleborough
 - Burgh & Haverscroft Ward (Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft East and Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft West)
 - Queens Ward (Besthorpe, Attleborough Queens East and Attleborough Queens West) be approved.

51/14 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - SWANTON MORLEY
(AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report which had been produced following a request from the Clerk of Swanton Morley Parish Council to increase the number of Swanton Morley Parish Councillors from seven to nine. A Community Governance Review was recommended.

Mr Atterwill, Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council was given the opportunity to address Members. He clarified the expected growth in the village brought about by the additional dwellings already built and those approved and expected to be built in the next few years, together with the change in the number of soldiers and their families stationed in the village. Overall there would be a 20% increase in the population since 2006. He pointed out that in the new Local Plan there might be scope for further growth in the village and noted that other villages of a similar size to Swanton Morley had nine Parish Councillors.

Councillor Carter was concerned that a similar request by Watton had been turned down and consistency was an issue.

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The Electoral Services Manager pointed out that Officers had recommended that a Review be carried out in that case also, but the Committee had decided that the change should be incorporated in the Breckland District Review which would be carried out in 2016.

Councillor Goreham agreed that consistency and being seen to be fair were key issues. However he felt that each community knew its own business best and he commended Swanton Morley on being a very proactive Parish Council. In terms of local democracy he thought the request should be supported but he was concerned that the residents of Watton might feel aggrieved.

Councillor Williams was concerned about the cost of a review. However, he acknowledged that Swanton Morley was a vibrant village. Other Parishes had difficulty recruiting Parish Councillors he asked if the same applied in Swanton Morley and Mr Atterwill advised that they had no problems filling vacancies.

In response to a question from Councillor Millbank it was confirmed that changes from the District Review in 2016 would not become effective until 2019.

Councillor Stasiak asked if it was appropriate to increase the number of Parish Councillors when the number of District Councillors was being reduced.

Councillor Robert Richmond agreed with Councillor Goreham's comments. He regularly attended Swanton Morley Parish Council meetings and they were very constructive. The Parish Councillors were active and 'hands-on', doing as much as they could themselves to save residents money and look after the community.

Councillor Goreham thought that the increase should be supported as Swanton Morley had a proven track record. He recalled that Watton had actually requested a reduction in the number of their Councillors and so their situation was not urgent, whereas with Swanton Morley the increase in their population meant that they needed more Councillors.

Councillor Carter also fully supported the proposal. His only concern had been consistency and he agreed that this was very different to the Watton case.

Councillor Williams noted that in his own village there were a separate Committee for the Village Hall. The amount of people on that Committee combined with the number of Parish Councillors meant there were 15 or 16 people working for the community, whereas in Swanton Morley the seven Parish Councillors managed the village hall as well.

Mr Atterwill agreed. They had taken over the management of the village hall which was a registered charity in 2009 when the existing Committee

had resigned. At that time the hall had a debt of £3000. They had worked with the Charity Commission and held a public meeting at which it had been agreed that the Parish Council would become the managing trustee. They held separate meetings for the Parish Council and the Village Hall committee and the Parish Clerk managed the bookings for the hall. It had been a success and the debt had been cleared, but it was a lot of work for just seven people. He went on to respond to the comment about the number of District Councillors being reduced by saying that that made it even more important to do things at a local level, in line with the Localism agenda.

The Chairman asked if there was sufficient capacity within the team for the review to go ahead if approved and the Electoral Services Manager confirmed that there was. The majority of work had been done the only issue would be collating and analysing the responses to the public consultation and compiling the report to the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director, Commissioning and Governance to carry out a Community Governance Review for Swanton Morley;
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director, Commissioning and Governance to agree the Timetable and Terms of Reference for the review; and
- 3) further reports to be brought to General Purposes Committee in order that decisions may be made in respect of the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review.

**52/14 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - GREAT ELLINGHAM
(AGENDA ITEM 10)**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report which responded to a request from Great Ellingham Parish Council for a review to include properties on the south side of the A11 which were currently in the adjoining Attleborough ward. It was the Officers' view that it would be a very complex review due to the change in boundaries that was being requested. That would require the permission of the Boundary Commission and they had indicated that they would not support the review. It was considered that it would be better to consider the proposal in the wider review which would take place in 2016.

Councillor Stasiak asked for clarification of the change to the ward boundaries and Members were directed to maps which had been hung on the wall which showed the existing ward boundaries and the new ward boundaries from 2015 following the recent Boundary Commission review.

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Councillor Millbank had lived in Great Ellingham and she felt that residents around the A11 would have more affinity with Attleborough.

RESOLVED to do nothing at this time and to carry out the review under the full Community Governance Review of the Breckland Council area scheduled to commence in 2016.

53/14 NEW REMUNERATION PACKAGE (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Chairman advised Members that there was nothing to report. The HR Manager would give a verbal update to the next meeting.

54/14 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 17 December 2014 at 10.00am in the Norfolk Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham, were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

CHAIRMAN