
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Held on Wednesday, 3 September 2008 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr R.W. Duffield (Chairman)	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr G.P. Balaam	Mrs S.R. Howard-Alpe
Mr D.S. Myers	

In Attendance

Julie Britton	- Senior Member Services Officer
Ian Vargeson	- Member Services Manager
Stephanie Butcher	- Licensing Team Leader
Andrea Long	- Environmental Planning Manager
Mike Wheatley	- Environmental Health Manager

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53/08 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

54/08 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs K Millbank, Mrs J Ball and Mr A Stasiak.

55/08 CREATION OF A HEALTH & SAFETY JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The Head of Environmental Health presented the report which concerned the creation of a Health & Safety Working Group.

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 imposed certain duties on Breckland Council as an employer. To comply with these duties the Council had commissioned a report by an independent consultant to review its position on health & safety compliance. From this report an Action Plan had been produced which highlighted measures that the Council needed to take in order to comply with health & safety legislation and best practice.

Members' attention was drawn to the revised Constitution and Terms of Reference at Appendix 2 which superseded that issued with the Agenda. The amendments were made quite clear; there would not now be any member involvement in the Group as all matters relating to health & safety would be reported through to the Local Joint Consultative Committee (LJCC).

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The Group would now consist of three representatives of management, including the Chief Executive, who would hold office as Chairman for one year, and three representatives of employees. The employees' side would include one Unison representative.

Referring to Council procedures, Members were made aware that the Chairman of the LJCC had seen the report and was happy with it going straight to General Purpose Committee for a decision.

In response to a concern about voting, it was explained that as a Working Group reporting to the LJCC, there would not be any formal decision making or necessity for formal voting arrangements to be put in place.

A meeting timetable had yet to be set up.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the approach to formally create a Health & Safety Joint Consultative Group that reports to the Council's Local Joint Consultative Committee be agreed;
- 2) the draft Constitution and Terms of Reference (as revised) be approved; and
- 3) the draft Work Plan as shown in Appendix 3 of the report be approved in principle.

**Mike
Wheatley**

56/08 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Licensing Team Leader presented the report.

Under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, local authorities may set Hackney Carriage fares. Under the above Acts the Council could only set a maximum level of fares. The fare shown on the meter was the maximum that could be charged; however, arrangements could be made between the hirer and the driver for a charge less than the maximum. The application formula had been worked out using the Standard Retail Index for Motorists for June 2008. The last application for a fare increase had been considered by the Committee on 14 December 2005 and implemented in February 2006.

The present fare chart had been attached at Appendix A of the report. A comparison chart incorporating the proposed increase, together with fares in comparative council areas were shown at Appendix B.

Any proposed increase in fares had to be advertised in the local press and kept at the Council Offices for any objections to be received. The proposed table of fares had been attached at Appendix D of the report.

If the Committee accepted the application an increase of 6.5% would be implemented with effect from 1 October 2008.

Action By

This did not apply to Private Hire vehicles.

The Licensing Team Leader explained the process for the taxi meters to be reprogrammed and the associated costs that came with it.

Referring to Appendix B, a Member wondered why Breckland's fares were higher than for most other local authorities in the area. In response, it was explained how the fares had been calculated had a bearing on this. It was noted that a number of the other authorities' had not yet increased taxi fares.

The Committee was of the opinion that because of the lack of public transport in the Breckland area it would be the old and the vulnerable that had to rely on taxis that would suffer.

Members were made aware that the supplementary charge of 20p for each hiring that had been agreed at a previous meeting would be revoked if the Committee was mindful to approve this increase.

The Committee felt that as the numbers of taxis had increased slightly in the area, business must be brisk; therefore, the current fares being charged at present must be right.

In response to a further question concerning how much officer time and work would be involved should the application be refused, the Licensing Team Leader explained that this would be very difficult to gauge until it was known what the response from taxi drivers would be. She reminded Members that Breckland Council did not have to implement an increase if it so wished as the wording in the legislation was that local authorities **may** increase its fares.

After considering the recommendations, it was proposed and seconded that the fare increase as proposed be not accepted.

New figures were suggested; however, if the meter could not be recalibrated to incorporate these new figures exactly, it was agreed that the Committee be provided with the adjusted fares before notifying the public.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the application from the hackney carriage proprietors requesting a fare review be accepted;
- 2) the fares to be increased in accordance with the above recommendations and not in accordance with Appendix D of the report, as follows:
 - i) for the first ½ mile - £3.00 (no change – to remain at £3.00);
 - ii) for the first mile - £3.20 (an increase of 20p - as originally recommended);
 - iii) cost for two miles - £4.85 (an increase of 5p - not 21p as originally recommended);

**Stephanie
Butcher**

Action By

- iv) cost for five miles - £10.20 (no change – to remain at £10.20);
 - v) cost of the running mile - £1.90 (a decrease of 1p from £1.91 as proposed);
 - vi) to retain the metered rate as the maximum rate that can be charged and that this be clearly shown on the fare table which should be of adequate size, preferably A4.
- 3) the Chairman be authorised to agree any minor adjustments to be consistent with calibration;
- 4) to undertake a fare review annually.

57/08 ASSISTANT HISTORIC BUILDINGS OFFICER - EXTENSION TO TEMPORARY CONTRACT (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The report sought Members' approval to extend the current contract of the Assistant Historic Buildings Officer by 12 months to December 2009.

The Environmental Planning Manager explained that the aforementioned assistant joined the Council on a temporary contract (funded by the Planning Delivery Grant) in 2004 and in February 2006 the post had been extended for a further two years until December 2008.

The Committee was made aware of the current workload and the immense area of historic environment that had to be covered in Breckland by the Team. The Assistant Historic Buildings Officer also provided valuable assistance in the Development Control department.

The Committee considered that there was sufficient justification in terms of workload to support the post on a permanent basis and made reference to the previous meeting where it had been noted that the Chief Executive wanted to divest the Council of all temporary contracts.

RESOLVED that, subject to the funding being approved by Cabinet:

- 1) the contract of the Assistant Historic Buildings Officer be extended by 12 months to December 2009; and
- 2) the Environmental Planning Manager investigate whether the post could become permanent.

Andrea Long

58/08 THETFORD: REQUEST FOR ORDER UNDER CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND POLICE ACT TO EXTEND DESIGNATED AREAS (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Member Services Manager presented the report.

There was currently an Order in force under the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 which gave the police powers to stop persons from consuming alcohol in designated open spaces within Thetford Town Centre. The Committee had now been asked to consider a request from the Thetford Town Council, supported by the Police, for the amendment of the Order to

Action By

extend the town centre area already designated and include additional areas at the Abbey, Barnham Cross and Redcastle Estates.

Members were informed that, since the publication of the Agenda, Thetford Town Council had requested that the area of the Cluniac Priory also be included in the Order.

The Committee was made aware of the time and costs involved in introducing these Orders. Members asked whether there was a possibility of a financial contribution from the police or Town Councils to reduce Breckland's overall costs.

There was a requirement for the police to provide evidence that these Orders were worth all the time and effort. A Member was of the opinion that the police had the power to move people on whether the area was designated or not. Powers were already available to deal with anti social aspects of drinking and it was not clear that, when these Orders existed, they were being enforced. He suggested that the police should be invited to future meetings to justify whether there was a need for such areas. The Member Services Manager suggested that it would be reasonable to ask for evidence that there was a noticeable and measurable reduction in the kind of behaviour the Orders sought to curb.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) the amended Order under Sections 12-15 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 to cover the additional areas as shown on the plans attached to the report be agreed;
- 2) the necessary statutory consultation be undertaken and, subject to there being no outstanding objections, the Order be confirmed and agreement reached in conjunction with the police on the date for the provisions to come into effect with the extended designated area;
- 3) consideration of any future applications for new, or amendments to existing, Orders should command a presence from the police and the relevant Town Council to support and justify the request; and
- 4) the possibility of financial contributions from other sources for such Orders be investigated.

**Ian
Vargeson**

59/08 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The next meeting of the General Purposes Committee would be held on Wednesday, 15 October 2008 at 10.00am in the Norfolk Room.

All to Note

The Chairman's apologies were accepted for this meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

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CHAIRMAN