

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

LOCAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**Held on Tuesday, 19 February 2008 at 2.00 pm in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Employers' Side

Mrs S.M. Matthews (Chairman)
Mrs T. Hewett
Mr K. Martin
Mr D.R. Williams JP

Staff Side

Mr M. Broughton
Mr R. Johnson
Dr Z. Waterford (Vice-Chairman)
Mr J. Elliott

In Attendance

Tim Leader	- Deputy Chief Executive
Julie Britton	- Senior Committee Officer
Stephen McGrath	- Principal Committee Officer
Anne O'Halleron	- Human Resources Consultant
Maxine O'Mahony	- Human Resources Manager

1/08 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Paternal Leave (Minute No. 29/07(g))

The heading of this item should read: "Paternal/Parental Leave".

2/08 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

There were no apologies for absence.

3/08 REDUNDANCY POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Human Resources Consultant was in attendance for this item and explained that the Redundancy Policy had been based on actual Breckland practice over the last few years.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the issue that needed to be addressed was whether Breckland Council wished to proceed with this redundancy policy that was currently in line with statutory and legislative requirements. He then gave an example of the levels of compensation payable in the event of redundancy being necessary.

Discussion then ensued upon the different multipliers used by comparable and neighbouring authorities, and the cost to the council tax payer if Breckland's policy was to be changed.

The Deputy Chief Executive felt it unnecessary to change the policy in the absence of compelling evidence that the Council

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needed to do so.

The Staff Side stressed that decisions on redundancy payments could have an impact on existing staff morale, the Council's future ability to recruit, and that the policy should allow flexibility for both now and in the future. It was suggested that offering this package would mean that employees could be treated significantly worse than their colleagues in neighbouring authorities in the event of redundancy and could create potential subsequent recruitment problems. The Staff Side felt that Breckland Council was not looking after its' employees if the redundancy policy remained as it was, particularly with the new pay/appraisal and car scheme which, in their opinion, had all been contentious. It was recognised that Breckland Council was not struggling financially so what was the reason for it holding back on enhancing its redundancy payments?

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Council continues to monitor the reasons why employees leave the authority. To date, the financial implications of the redundancy policy had not been highlighted as a contributing factor.

During discussion of the financial implications of the proposed redundancy policy, a Member reminded the Committee of the Council's duty to consider staff welfare but also balance that against the requirement to spend public money wisely.

On the matter of performance and council tax, a Member of the Staff Side quoted figures from South Norfolk Council which, it was suggested, was not a great deal different from Breckland's. However, the multiplier in their redundancy policy, like those in most other authorities in Norfolk, was higher than that proposed by Breckland Council. This could be important in the event of Local Government Reorganisation as it would be cheaper for the new Unitary council to make Breckland's staff redundant than their counterparts at other authorities. Members were not being misled into thinking that the changes to the policy would necessitate massive payouts, all they were being asked was to consider the Staff Sides proposed multipliers.

The Deputy Chief Executive stressed that if the Local Government Review (LGR) was to transpire, then and only then, unless the situation changed, would it be relevant to consider the affect that the Council's redundancy policy would have on key staff. In that event, the redundancy policy would be part of a package of recruitment and retention packages which would need to be revised. In the interim, the Council should be focusing on how to retain its existing staff. He asked the Vice-Chairman what evidence she had that would provide him with a good reason to consider changing the existing policy.

The Vice-Chairman stated that the Council had implemented many new policies/schemes recently and asked Members to consider the new pay scheme as an example. She felt that the new pay scheme had left 60% of staff at the top of the pay scale less motivated than ever. To add a further eroding condition

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would leave Breckland staff feeling very dispirited.

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that, as far as the pay scheme was concerned, it might be better to change that, particularly if it was causing staff to be less motivated, rather than to change the existing redundancy policy in the light of the Government deciding on Unitary Status. He assured Members that the Pay and Reward Scheme would be re-visited in April 2008.

A Member felt that this was not the right time politically to change the redundancy policy. However, he agreed that all the figures warranted careful consideration and suggested that the average mean should be included for Members of the General Purposes Committee to compare. A Member of the Staff Side reminded the Committee that this policy had already been deferred from the previous meeting of the Local Joint Consultative Committee so that the aforementioned figures could be gathered.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded by stating that the Employers had a duty to prepare and implement policies in accordance with legislation. It was not their job to provide comparable information for the Staff Side to use.

A Member of the Staff Side had concerns with the suggested paragraph in Section 4 (page 8), as follows:

“.....it was agreed that the Council must consult with recognised trade unions:

- at least 90 days before if 100 or more employees are to be made redundant and
- 30 days before if 20 – 99 employees are to be made redundant.

He asked whether the aforementioned paragraph (second bullet point) could be amended to read: “30 days before if 0 to 99 employees are to be made redundant”. In response, Members were informed that it could not be changed as it was a statutory notification.

When determining whether a recommendation could be made to the General Purposes Committee to accept the policy, not the remuneration part, the Staff Side representatives indicated that they could not support the policy as they were opposed to the suggested level of compensation in the event of redundancy payable.

After further discussion, the Deputy Chief Executive assured the Staff Side that all the arguments both for and against would be included in the General Purposes Committee report.

RESOLVED that the Deputy Chief Executive prepare a report to accompany the suggested Redundancy Policy for consideration at the General Purposes Committee on 26 March 2008 pointing out the issues raised above and incorporating any financial

comparison information provided by Staff Side.

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Z Waterford/
A O'Halleron

**4/08 RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING GUIDELINES
(AGENDA ITEM 5)**

In section 5 of the policy "Further Information", it was agreed that the sentence, "Making a request for alternative purposes or abusing this provision" should be amended by the removal of the word "or" and the word "Abusing" should be the start of the next sentence.

A O'Halleron

The Joint Committee noted that the amendments made to this policy reflected the recent statutory changes. The Work and Families Act 2006 had extended the right to all employees who have the responsibility for caring for certain adults as well as child care responsibilities.

RECOMMEND to the General Purposes Committee that the amended Right to Request Flexible Working Guidelines as presented, taking account of the comments above, be adopted.

5/08 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Following a request, it was agreed that future meetings of the Joint Committee would commence at **10.30am**.

All to note

The next meeting of the Joint Committee would take place on Thursday, 20 March 2008 at 10.30am in the Norfolk Room.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm

CHAIRMAN