
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Held on Wednesday, 18 February 2009 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr R.W. Duffield (Chairman) Mr D.S. Myers
Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman) Mr I. Sherwood
Mr G.P. Balaam Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mrs J. Ball

Also Present

Mrs D.K.R. Irving

In Attendance

Julie Britton - Senior Member Services Officer
Ian Vargeson - Member Services Manager
Mark Stokes - Strategic Director (Services)
Anita Brennan - Strategic Housing Manager
John Walker - Principal Officer - Housing Advice and
Homelessness

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10/09 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Pursuant to Minute No. 9/09 (Organisation Review – Environmental Health) it had previously been agreed, at the request of the Chairman, that the 'out of hours' arrangements be reported back to the General Purposes Committee in six months time; this request however, had not been noted.

Subject to the above condition being added to the resolution, the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**Mark
Stokes**

11/09 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs S Chapman-Allen, Mr D Williams and Mesdames S Miller, K Millbank and L Turner.

12/09 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRAINEE (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The Strategic Manager (Services) presented the report which concerned a request for the recruitment of a trainee Economic Development Officer for an initial fixed 3 year term.

The creation of such a post would provide both the service and the individual with a sound opportunity to train in the field of economic

**Lindy
Warmer**

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development and fill a vital role in developing phase 2 of the Rural Enterprise Valley project.

The post would be externally funded through the LABGI Reserve and this included any future redundancy costs.

A Member, in fully supporting the request, applauded the Council for taking on apprentices, particularly when it would benefit the development of the A11 corridor.

RESOLVED that the recruitment of a trainee Economic Development Officer for an initial fixed term of three years with the option to review during that period be approved.

13/09 TO APPOINT AN EXTERNALLY FUNDED POST OF A YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING ADVISORY OFFICER (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Principal Officer (Housing Advice and Homelessness) and the Strategic Housing Manager were in attendance for this item.

John Walker

Members were informed that the Housing Advice Team had seen a significant increase in numbers of young people who were presenting themselves to Breckland Council as homeless or as being insecurely housed. Preventing homelessness amongst this age group could be quite challenging as young people were considered to be much less well equipped to live independently; unlike the Council's adult customers.

The purpose of this proposed fixed term post was to make the timely interventions necessary to effectively prevent homelessness in this age group, mediating with young people and their families in their homes, and intervening in partnership with other agencies so that solutions to their housing problems could be found.

It was noted that new regulations from Government were expected soon. These regulations would ensure that after 31 March 2010, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by local authorities for persons of 16/17 years of age would be unlawful except in an emergency.

In parallel to this post being introduced, Breckland Council was currently progressing, in partnership with the Supporting People programme, the development of hostel accommodation specifically catering for the younger age group. This would take the form of redesignation of an existing supported housing scheme in Thetford and the provision of 'foyer' type accommodation which not only provided temporary hostel accommodation but provided training and sought employment for young people between 16-25 years. As part of a wider approach, Breckland Council also financially supported the YMCA to deliver a 'night stop' scheme to avoid putting young people into the Council's emergency accommodation.

A Member had concerns with the two year time element of the post. He felt it was rather optimistic of the Council to expect this one appointment to be the resolution to such an on-going growing problem in such a short space of time. For example, if part of the post holder's remit was to work in schools to educate children about the negative aspects of homelessness, surely a

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longer time element was required? In response, the Principal Officer advised that the post holder would be working with a wide range of other organisations. The education element would be a small part of the role and would be targeted to the most appropriate age groups in schools. Intervention would also take place with Connexions and in more serious cases, Children's Services. At the same time, a new scheme was to be piloted in Breckland called 'Families under Pressure Service'. These organisations, in partnership with Breckland Council, would be trying to prevent homelessness amongst those persons who were at greater risk and would try to address any issues in the family before the person reached the age of 16.

The Strategic Housing Manager advised that in two years time there should be some tangible outcomes from the appointment otherwise the post would not have achieved what the Housing Team wanted.

In response to a concern as to whether Breckland Council would push the other organisations along if they started to withdraw support, the Strategic Housing Manager advised that Breckland Council was an enabling Authority and as such would be quite happy to produce any feedback necessary after the two year period.

Diana Irving, the Young People's Champion for Breckland Council was in attendance. She pointed out that at a Young Persons' Action Group meeting that she had recently attended one of the issues raised was about the appointment of this post.

In response to a question as to why there had been such an increase in young people becoming homeless, Members were informed that it was difficult to generalise; however, the 16/17 year olds that the Council had seen, although for many different reasons, were mainly finding themselves homeless through arguments with parents. The first step in these cases was to talk to the parents and to try and assess whether the situation could be remedied. There were others who were classed as being at risk in their own homes and for these cases, under the Housing Act, the Council had to provide emergency accommodation.

The Chairman asked about whether there were any financial implications particularly where redundancy was concerned. In response, the Principal Housing Officer explained that any redundancy costs had been included in the external grant funding.

RESOLVED that the temporary appointment of a Young People's Housing Advisory Officer be approved.

**14/09 ELECTION FEES: COUNTY, DISTRICT AND PARISH COUNCIL
(AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Member Services Manager explained that the proposed scale of fees recommended for the County, District and Parish Council Elections for the year commencing 1 April 2009 had been agreed by the Chief Executives of Norfolk District Councils.

The revised fees would apply to the County election on 4th June 2009;

**Ian
Vargeson**

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European election fees were not covered by this legislation.

The previous year's figures were provided verbally for comparison.

The Returning Officer's fees had been set out at the top of page 22 of the report.

The Member Services Manager clarified a concern with regard to fees for a joint County and European election.

RESOLVED that the recommended Scale of Fees for County, District and Parish Council Elections for the year commencing 1 April 2009 be adopted.

15/09 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 1 April 2009 were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.40 am

CHAIRMAN