

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of a meeting of the Asset Development Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on 27th March 2017 at 5:40pm.

P R E S E N T

Councillor Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Councillor David Chaplin
Councillor Steve Cheetham
Councillor Lorna Dupré
Councillor Coralie Green
Councillor Mathew Shuter
Councillor Lisa Stubbs

OTHERS

Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
John Hill – Chief Executive
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager
Phil Rose – Strategic Land Advisor
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

39. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

40. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no apologies or substitutions.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

42. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the Asset Development Committee meeting held on 28th November 2016 be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

43. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- It was pleasing to report that the Council had achieved the exact amount of car parking spaces in Barton Road as previously.

- An additional 4 free car parking spaces had been found in Broad Street car park.
- Delighted that planning permission had been gained for the car parks at Littleport Railway Station and The Dock, Ely.
- Mepal Outdoor Centre had been returned to the Council in a sad state. The Chairman had visited the facility and had been amazed at its extent and its possibilities. A Members site visit to view it would be arranged. There had already been a considerable amount of interest shown by other parties interested in its future.

44. **LITTLE THETFORD PLAY PARK**

The Committee considered a report, reference R231, previously circulated, which outlined the transfer of the Council owned play area in Little Thetford to Little Thetford Parish Council.

The Legal Services Manager advised the Committee that a letter had been received from the Parish Council requesting the play area be transferred to it. The Parish Council currently maintained the area, though the District Council did undertake inspections. It was suggested that, as part of the transfer, a covenant be put on the land to preserve its status as a play area. An additional recommendation was made that should the land cease to be a play area that the Council would purchase the land back for the sum of £5.

Councillor Bill Hunt thought it good that the Parish Council was interested in taking these facilities over but would need to maintain and invest in it. There was also the concern that the District Council's interests were protected, as the Parish Council could close the play area and leave it unused. Therefore support should be given to the additional recommendation to enable the District Council to buy the land back for £5.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs declared a personal interest, as she was a Little Thetford Parish Councillor. She stated that if the Parish Council did not obtain the play area then it would not be able to apply for grants to improve it. It had already commissioned a new fence to be installed around the area to ensure it was kept in good repair.

Councillor Mathew Shuter questioned the actual area under question, as the two maps provided did not match up. This needed to be properly designated before it was transferred. The Legal Services Manager explained that the map showing the smaller area related to land that had been registered. The licence to the Parish Council included the whole of the larger area shown on the second map. It will be checked with the Parish Council which area it wanted transferred before the details were finalised.

Councillor Lorna Dupré assumed the play area had play equipment but queried whether that equipment could be removed without losing the 'play area' definition or whether the Council could ensure that the area kept suitable equipment.

The Committee then amended the recommendation to include the concerns raised about suitable play equipment, the area of land to be included and requirement for the Council to buy it back as aforementioned. This was agreed. The Chairman requested that a preliminary letter confirming the intention to transfer land be sent to the Parish Council.

It was resolved:

That the Legal Services Manager be authorised to offer the play area to Little Thetford Parish Council for the sum of £5 subject to:

- the transfer containing a restrictive covenant to use it as a children's play area with suitable play equipment;
- clarification of the land to be transferred;
- the District Council buying back the land for the sum of £5 should it cease to be used as a play area.

45. **ASSET TRANSFER OF EARITH BRIDGE AND BURWELL TRAVELLER SITES**

The Committee considered a report, reference R232, previously circulated, which outlined the transfer of the Council owned play area in Little Thetford to Little Thetford Parish Council.

The Housing and Community Safety Manager reminded the Committee that Council had a statutory obligation to house gypsy and traveller families and taking on the Burwell and Earith traveller sites would help ensure the Council met this obligation. A recent Needs Assessment had flagged up that an additional 38 pitches would be required by 2031/32. If the two sites continued to be managed by the County Council it could close them and sell them on the open market resulting in a loss of pitches, a loss of control over the sites and loss of income. The Burwell site had been closed since 2015 but needed to be protected. No major improvements had been completed on that site due the uncertainty of its future.

Any leases would include a clause allowing the sites to be handed back without any penalties. Negotiation had taken place with the County Council which had agreed to fund and install a new water treatment plant at the Earith site before transferring to this Council.

Councillor Steve Cheetham noted that a similar plant had been installed at Wentworth costing £100K. What were the reasons the Burwell site had been abandoned? Government funding could be applied for to improve the site and bring it back into use. Councillor Mathew Shuter wondered whether it was due to cultural reasons for the abandonment and queried the value of the site if it was not occupied. The community appeared not to want to see it used and the Council needed to find out why.

The Housing and Community Safety Manager revealed that there were issues with the Burwell site and the families had left the site. However, given time, it could be brought back into use provided the District Council could obtain it.

Burwell Parish Council was very keen for the Council to secure the site to prevent it being sold on and developed.

Councillor Coralie Green questioned the Needs Assessment for 38 extra pitches, as this did not tally with the Council's Local Plan. The Committee was informed that the Needs Assessment had been carried out by the Housing and Community Safety Manager and had predicted the extra requirements to account for the future extension of the existing families, who would have nowhere else to go.

Councillor David Chaplin was slightly confused about the situation as it appeared that travellers did not want the site and the Parish Council did not want it used or sold on. If the site were to be taken on by this Council then appropriate indemnities would be required. The Housing and Community Safety Manager expected the site to be transferred to prevent it being sold but the Council would do nothing with it initially. If it were then developed half of the money would go to the County Council, due to a clause in the lease.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs asked whether there were any costs for the repairs at the Burwell site and whether there were any plans to undertake a site survey before its transfer. The Committee was informed that the Council already looked after the site and there were no plans for any major work. So there was no major expenditure, just usual wear-and-tear, and the site had been assessed for asbestos and legionnaires disease.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Council take on a 125 year lease of the Earith Traveller site for an annual rent of £1;
- (ii) That the Council take on a 125 year lease of the Burwell Traveller site for an annual rent of £1, subject to the completion of works, obtaining indemnities and full disclosure.

46. **ASSET MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report, reference R233, previously circulated, that updated Members on the Asset Management Planned Maintenance Programme for 2016/17 including spend to date.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager advised the Committee that the figure under paragraph 3.2 of the report should have read £1163.25 and not as stated. Some programme work had not been completed and the Committee were updated as follows:

- The Grange car park – it was complicated to re-arrange parking whilst the works would take place;
- Newnham Street car park – awaiting the decision about the Newnham Street toilets before proceeding;
- Legionella testing – all testing had been completed but there were problems with the contractor;
- Oliver Cromwell's House – on hold due to an ongoing review;

- The Depot – awaiting effects of the new waste contract;
- Play Areas – all the maintenance had been paid for via the budget;
- Carpet replacements – on hold until the office moves had concluded;
- Fire Exit – delayed awaiting decision on possible reconfiguration of Reception;
- Server Room – the air conditioning was on hold;
- Ely Museum – awaiting the outcome of their National Lottery Grant application.

Councillor Steve Cheetham questioned whether not sorting out the air conditioning in the computer server room would cause problems. The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager assured the Committee that he was working with the information Technology department and that it was currently fit-for-purpose.

Councillor David Chaplin offered apologies and left the meeting at this point, 6:24pm.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs enquired after the timescale for the legionella work. It was confirmed that there was no set date for it to be completed. Work would recommence once a new contractor had been found.

It was resolved:

That the actual spend to the end of February 2017 as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

47. **PROCUREMENT OF NEW COMMUTER CAR PARKS**

The Committee considered a report, R234 previously circulated, which outlined the procurement of a new commuter car park at The Dock, Ely and the extension of the existing car park at Littleport Station.

The Strategic Land Advisor advised the Committee that the land for the car parks at the Dock, Ely and Littleport Railway Station had been secured and planning permission obtained. The Ely site was now on the point of going out to tender, whilst the Littleport one was 3 to 4 months behind. A procurement review had been conducted which had raised concerns about the involvement of small to medium local contractors. They could be put off from tendering using the open tender process. This in turn could lead to only non-local larger companies becoming interested. The Council wanted to seek procurement locally and had looked at the option to engage local companies. The East Cambridgeshire Trading Company should take on this work on behalf of the Council as it would allow local contractors to be contacted to see if they were prepared to take this work on. The advantages of agreeing this option were outlined in paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11 of the report. This would give good opportunities for local companies and hopefully result in keener prices. The Company had the expertise to manage the process and would be able to act quicker than the Council. This would also provide additional turnover for the

Company enhancing the teckal balance. The Company would become the development manage and receive fees but overall it would be cost neutral.

Councillor Lorna Dupré questioned the statements in the report about no overall fee being made by the Trading Company and how it would add to its turnover. Although it also stated that the risk would be with the Company that risk would also be the Council. The Strategic Land Advisor acknowledged that there would be a risk but technically this would be the responsibility of the Company. With regards the turnover, this would go through the Company's books.

Councillor Mathew Shuter wanted to encourage this approach as it gave local companies the opportunity to do this work. Little companies would be more competitive, it would give them some prestige and show how the Council was spending taxpayers' money to help the local economy, therefore this was totally recommended.

Councillor Bill Hunt thought the car parks would be better for the community and local builders should be used for them. There was concern that the new car park off Angel Drove would fill up quickly so perhaps a 'capacity' sign could be erected to inform motorists, but this could be considered at a later date. It would also be logical to use any spare capacity at the new archives centre adjacent, as this Council covered it with its rangers.

It was resolved:

That the Chief Executive be instructed to complete the necessary Development Agreements with East Cambs Trading Company Ltd (ECTC) to facilitate the procurement and delivery of the new car parks in Ely and Littleport on behalf of the Council.

48. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee considered its forward agenda plan.

The forward agenda plan was noted.

49. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of items 12 to 13 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

50. **LAND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE 2016/17**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference R235, previously circulated, that provided an update on land development opportunities and the asset development programme.

Councillor Bill Hunt stressed that the Council would have a coach park at the new Downham Road development. Stakeholders would still be kept informed about the development at Barton Road, this should include those living in Parade Lane and Silver Street, and this should also be circulated to all councillors and parish councils.

In response to Councillor Coralie Green's concern, the Committee was assured that it was intended that the Barton Road car park would still have a coach drop-off point.

The Strategic Land Advisor stated that there were no initial thoughts about the future of the Paradise Pool and Centre once the new leisure facility was built. This would have to be considered.

It was resolved:

That the progress in relation to the Land Development Opportunities and Asset Development Programme be noted.

51. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the Asset Development Committee meeting held on 28th November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 6:42pm.