

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of a meeting of the Asset Development Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on 28th November 2016 at 4:00pm.

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

Councillor Lis Every – City of Ely Council
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
John Hill – Chief Executive
Phil Rose – Strategic Land Advisor, East Cambs. Trading Company
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Mr Simon Bainbridge – Highfield School
Mr Philip Woolner – Highfield School

The Chairman welcomed Mr Bainbridge and Mr Woolner to the meeting and reminded the Committee that they were attending due to an urgent item relating to Highfield School. City Councillor Lis Every was also welcomed, who was also attending for that item.

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

28. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no apologies or substitutions.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. MINUTES

Councillor Bill Hunt pointed out that although page 2 of the minutes stated that two more parking spaces had been found at Broad Street car park, this figure was now four, which was confirmed by the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager.

In relation to the road painting at Witchford, mentioned on page 3, it was confirmed that the painting had not yet been done but a request had been made to include it on the County Council's next work schedule.

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the Asset Development Committee meeting held on 19th September 2016 be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

31. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- At the Barton Road car park an additional 38 spaces had been found but 32 had been made unavailable because of the archaeological dig.

Councillor David Chaplin joined the meeting at this point, 4:04pm.

The Chairman continued and revealed that the building work was expected to start late January or early February next year.

- There was excellent news about the car parking at Littleport rail station, as the Council had secured additional land and some of it would be used to provide around 80 more parking spaces to add to the existing 40. It was anticipated that the planning application for this would be submitted in the New Year.
- Also in the New Year an application would be made for the new car park near the Tesco Click-and-Collect facility, which would deliver around 130 new parking spaces.

32. **THE MALTINGS COTTAGE**

The Committee considered an urgent report, reference R131, previously circulated, due to the poor state of the Maltings Cottage that required urgent action. It set out a request from the City of Ely Council to assign the lease on the Maltings Cottage to Highfield School, Ely, who would be willing to refurbish the building.

The Chairman tabled a revised motion so that, should the request be approved, there would be no hold ups in proceedings. He then asked Mr Bainbridge to give his presentation.

Mr Bainbridge tabled his presentation and explained the background to Highfield School. It was a school that catered for students with a wide range of special needs and aimed to enable all their students to achieve their full potential. One major problem related to employing the students and, although the school had provided some opportunities, it wanted to enable students to work within a public-facing environment. Therefore, the school was looking to start a café enterprise using the Maltings Cottage. This had the support of the

students and their parents. A pop-up café had been established at the Cathedral Centre, which had been partially successful. To take this further, plans had been drawn up with a view to using the Maltings Cottage. The building had numerous problems, including damp and asbestos use, making the building at risk. The internal layout would have to be changed to accommodate a toilet/changing area, more seating and a study area for the students. A local builder had been approached for an estimate of costs, which had come out around £125K just to make the building habitable. Extra costs would be incurred to make further changes. The school would be looking to put together a funders list and build a case for funding. Although a steering group had been established other partners would be welcome to help finalise the business plan.

Councillor Coralie Green was excited by this project, as it would be good for the students and for Ely, as a riverside café was wanted. So this would be given her whole hearted support.

Councillor Lorna Dupré questioned the term of the lease that the school proposed to take on. It was revealed that the school would take on the remainder of the existing lease, which was between 21 and 22 years, after which the building would return to the District Council.

Councillor David Chaplin acknowledged that there was a need for this facility but queried whether it would be competing with rate-paying businesses. To help its business, it was important that the café had an outside area.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs asked whether the café would only be open during term time. Mr Bainbridge assured the Committee that the café would be open all year round. Although it was recognised that the summer months would be the busiest, ideas were being considered to utilise the resource in the less busy months.

Councillor Steve Cheetham was concerned about the cost of the proposed refurbishment. Councillor Bill Hunt thought the revised recommendations provided a pragmatic approach. The Committee had to consider the Council's asset objectively, so it would be better to button this matter up via a legal agreement, with the City Council acting as guarantor. It was therefore appropriate for the Chief Executive and the Committee Chairman to ensure things were tied up properly. It appeared to be a wonderful scheme for the pupils and the city and should be supported.

It was resolved:

That the request by City of Ely Council to assign the lease for The Maltings Cottage to Highfield School, Ely be approved and that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Asset Development Committee, be authorised to execute the agreement.

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

The Committee considered a report, reference R128, 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 new parking area in Barton Road for Poets House provided 9 parking spaces. This had freed up another 19 spaces plus 22 from the previous hotel parking area. The Council was also responsible for repairing the old lime kilns in Isleham. The brickwork was deteriorating and would require specialist work to correct. All the garages in St Johns Road, Ely were let and had recently received some refurbishment to doors and gutters.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs asked after the Wentworth travellers' site. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager stated that the works were in progress. A new licence had been applied for, a new lay-by would need planning permission and the clients were being kept informed.

Councillor Lorna Dupré queried the percentage of projects that had been completed, how this would look at year end and whether this percentage could be regarded as normal for this time of year. It would be helpful if some explanation could be provided within the report if works were held up. There was also some confusion over the budgets for electrical testing and periodic inspections, as some work had been itemised and some not and no explanations had been given.

The Committee was told that the expenditure figures always lagged behind after the work had been completed, as the bills were received late. Some projects had not started, though quotes for them had been received. The percentage figure for this year was slightly ahead of previous years but it was expected that the work would be completed by year end on or under budget. The major projects relating to Barton Road, footpaths, The Grange and Ely Museum had been signed off and had come in under budget.

Councillor Mathew Shuter questioned the expenditure relating to lights in Kirtling. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager advised the Committee that the Council had historic responsibility for a number of lights in different locations that had been left over when the Council's housing stock had been sold off. These were mostly located in car parks owned by the Council.

Councillor Coralie Green asked about the figures attributed to the Trading Company. The Strategic Land Advisor clarified that those figures related to consultancy advice, which was invoiced quarterly, and for the feasibility studies conducted on special work completed earlier in the year.

It was resolved:

That the actual spend to the end of September 2016 as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

34. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee considered its forward agenda plan. Councillor Coralie Green questioned the two dates for April 2017 and the date of the Committee meeting after that. The Democratic Services Officer replied that the second April date was a duplicate and that no further Committee meeting dates had yet been arranged after that date.

The forward agenda plan was received.

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

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of items 9 to 11 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).

36. **MARKET STREET, ELY**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference R129, previously circulated, that outlined proposals for some Council owned assets.

The Director, Commercial advised the Committee as to the background to the assets and the issue in question and proposed a set of recommendations to address them.

The Committee considered the proposals to be reasonable, which would give the Council was flexibility.

It was resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

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

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference R130, previously circulated, that provided an update on land development opportunities and the asset development programme.

The Strategic Land Adviser advised the Committee about the current status of developments ongoing and about several other potential development opportunities.

The Committee were appreciative of the communication with Members and local residents regarding the Barton Road site in Ely and expected that to continue. In response to a number of Committee enquiries, the Strategic Land Advisor provided some clarification on a number of issues relating to Council assets and potential sites for development.

It was resolved:

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

38. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the Asset Development Committee meeting held on 19th September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 5:06pm.