

Minutes of a meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday 13th October 2014 at 4:00pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Councillor Lis Every
Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith, MBE
Councillor Tony Goodge
Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh
Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Pauline Wilson

OFFICERS

Kathy Batey – HR & Facilities Service Manager
Maggie Camp – Solicitor
Spencer Clark – Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer
Karen Freya – Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Development)
Tracey Harding – Team Leader, Tourism & Town Centre Services (Agenda Item No 6)
John Hill – Chief Executive
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

I N A T T E N D A N C E

Councillor Ian Allen

16. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

17. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no apologies for absence.

18. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman declared an interest in Agenda Item No 9 (Barton Close, Witchford), saying that he knew one of the people involved. He said the Vice Chairman would take the Chair for this item; he would take no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

19. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th July 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

20. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman felt that today's earlier site visits had been very useful. Members of the Sub-Committee visited the Riverside in Ely, the Wentworth Travellers Site, Wisbech Road at Littleport, and Tower Road in Ely. The Administration had clear goals but there was, he said, a need to be fully inclusive with input from Members from all parties. He would welcome comments on what the Administration was trying to achieve.
- The Chairman and the Chief Executive would be looking at various sites throughout the District and they would be brought forward to Committee as soon as was possible.
- The lease on St Thomas' Place was going ahead and the building would soon be occupied. Payments were being made before each month and the invoice was sent out 10 days beforehand.

21. **POST OFFICE UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee considered a report, P89, previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on the current position of the Post Office sited in Newnham Street Car Park, Ely.

Having given a brief reminder of the background to the issue, the Team Leader, Tourism & Town Centre Services informed Members that the Post Office's public consultation was now completed and they were hopeful of being able to move into the new premises by mid-November 2014. If a further extension of time was required for a few more weeks, this could be considered and dealt with as a matter immediate of urgency, but at the moment there was no indication as to whether this was likely.

It was noted that if the Post Office occupied the site for the full length of the extended licence term and vacated Newnham Street Car Park by 5th December 2014, the total revenue received by the District Council would be £18,250. The Service Delivery Plan for Markets and Town Centre Services (including Tourism), to be considered by the Commercial Services Committee in November 2014, included a proposal to use part of this income to launch a pre-Christmas campaign to promote free car parking in the District.

Councillor Griffin-Singh remarked that once the Post Office had moved into its new premises, the Newnham Street site should be checked and any damage made good.

Councillor Friend-Smith enquired how the conflict regarding the Conservation Officer's approach had been resolved in respect of the new premises, and the Team Leader, Tourism & Town Centre Services replied that she was not aware of there having been any objections.

The Chairman stated that the Post Office was secure in its tenancy until 5th December and was required to give a month's notice. He had no real concerns if the agreement overran because they would be charged on a pro rata basis. In response to Councillor Griffin-Singh's earlier comment, he said that any damage to the Newnham Street Car Park would have to be repaired properly.

It was resolved:

That the report be noted.

22. **ASSET MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2014/15**

The Sub-Committee considered a report, reference P90, previously circulated, which sought to update Members on the proposed Asset Management Planned Maintenance Programme for 2014/15 (as approved by the Asset Development Committee on 16th April 2014), including spend to date.

The HR & Facilities Service Manager reminded Members that this was a standard report and the attached documents had been updated. She drew attention to Appendix 1, which set out the Maintenance Programme for 2014/15, and Appendix 2 which detailed the revised Programme as at 31st August 2014 highlighting changes, actual spend and the latest overall budget projections including the impact on the Council's Asset Management Reserve.

The main updates to the Programme were as follows:

- Actual spend of £60,305, representing 29% of total estimated maintenance programme costs;
- Resurfacing repairs works completed to The Grange car park;
- Tender process completed for the replacement of the main boiler at The Grange;
- Repairs to the footpath along Palace Green, Ely commenced on 6th October.

The HR & Facilities Service Manager recommended that the replacement of the main boiler at The Grange be deferred until Spring 2015, as this would be a more appropriate time to complete the work and it would also reduce the impact on the Council's Asset Management Reserve in 2014/15.

Councillor Friend-Smith asked what would happen if the main boiler went wrong. She questioned the wisdom of deferring replacement if it needed to be replaced, and she asked why replace it if it was not really necessary. She also

wished to know who owned the footpath along Palace Green and what their responsibilities were.

The Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer replied that the footpath fell within the lease with the Cathedral and the District Council was responsible for its upkeep. With regard to the boiler, early summer would be the best time (in terms of least impact) to replace it.

Councillor Goodge, referring to the revenue received from the Newnham Street Car Park, asked about the condition of the other car parks and said he thought the money should be used for maintenance and repair rather than the Christmas campaign. The Chairman responded, saying there was normally a budget for car parks. However, the money from the mobile Post Office was almost a windfall and some would be used to change signage within Ely and on the outskirts to publicise the fact that Ely is the only city in East Anglia with free parking.

Councillor Hobbs cautioned that any delay in replacing damaged surfaces could cost the Council dear in years to come, and he suggested that the costs shown in the report were widely out. The Chief Executive agreed that the money was a windfall and said the Council would take advantage of it. The Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer had informed him that it might be necessary to look at the car park in Fountain Lane, Soham and this might possibly be brought forward. Any works might be achieved within budget.

Councillor Hobbs said he had been told that any windfall would be spent in Ely because of residents having been inconvenienced. The Chairman replied that he did not recall this being agreed, and besides which, it was the residents of the whole District who had been inconvenienced. The Chief Executive added that he did not recall such a resolution. He said he still intended to bring forward the report on Soham.

Councillor Goodge requested and it was agreed that a report on the condition of the car parks would be brought to the Sub-Committee in due course.

The Chairman expressed his delight at the way in which Officers had grasped the message coming from Members about economising and he drew Members' attention to Appendix 2 of the report. He reiterated the need to have reserves for emergency decisions, and highlighted the toilets on Palace Green as being such an example. Having consulted with the Chairman of the Commercial Services Committee, work would immediately be carried out on them to bring them up to an acceptable standard in advance of forthcoming public events.

The Chief Executive said that having been discussing the Asset Management Reserve and the impact on it, he would report back to Members on the end of year outturn at the next meeting. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

1. That the actual spend to the end of August 2014, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be noted.
2. That the recommended change to the Maintenance Plan, as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report, be approved.

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

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item nos. 9 to 12 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).

(At this point in the meeting Councillor Hunt vacated the Chair and Councillor Griffin-Singh, Vice Chairman, assumed the Chair.)

24. **BARTON CLOSE, WITCHFORD**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference P91, previously circulated, relating to Barton Close, Witchford.

The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Development) summarised the main points of her report which set out the background to the issue, the options available to Members and the financial implications to be considered when making their decision.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Ian Allen addressed the Sub-Committee.

It was resolved:

That the recommendations, as set out in the report, be agreed.

(At this point in the meeting Councillor Hunt resumed the Chair.)

25. **2014/15 ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference P92, previously circulated, which gave an update on the Council's operational and non-operational assets.

The Chief Executive advised the Sub-Committee as to the current status of the assets listed within the development programme.

It was resolved:

That subject to the agreed amendment, the recommendations, as set out in the report, be agreed

26. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Sub-Committee received and noted the Exempt Forward Agenda Plan.

It was resolved:

That the Exempt Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

27. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 30th July 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 5:25pm.