

AGENDA ITEM NO. x

Minutes of a meeting of the Asset Development Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday 16th April 2014 at 4:00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Councillor Kevin Ellis (as Substitute for Councillor David Ambrose Smith)
Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith MBE
Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor James Palmer
Councillor Tony Parramint
Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor Hazel Williams MBE
Councillor Gareth Wilson

OTHERS

Maggie Camp – Senior Legal Assistant
Darren Dixon – Head of Community Services
John Hill – Chief Executive
Andrew Killington – Deputy Chief Executive
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Steed – Senior Legal Assistant
Keith Stronach - Principal Facilities & Asset Management Officer

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the last meeting of this particular Committee, reminding them that its work would be taken over by a new sub-committee.

Councillor James Palmer left the meeting at this point, 4:01pm.

52. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

53. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillors David Ambrose Smith, David Brown and Andy Wright. Councillor Kevin Ellis substituted for Councillor Ambrose Smith for this meeting.

54. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

55. **MINUTES – 20th February 2014**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

56. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- The Assetbank webpages had been launched with two assets shown - St John's Garage Site and Barton Close. The Chairman had been interviewed by the local media that morning, following the issue of a press release. The two sites were open to any options, which would be brought back to the new Sub-Committee for consideration.
- Some ex-local authority houses in the district did not have vehicular access. As a result some people drove over District Council land to their homes causing chaos. This should be stopped. However, it would be reasonable to offer them alternatives, so the Chief Executive should be asked to report back after writing to those people affected about the use of matting and fencing.

Councillor James Palmer returned to the meeting at this point, 4:06pm.

The residents and the parish councils should be given the opportunity to pay for this work. This included a site in Little Thetford where the Chief Executive would write to the residents affected.

Councillor Hazel Williams queried whether there was a mixture of housing at that location, suggesting that Sanctuary Hereward could help with funding the work, as had been done in Burwell a few years ago.

Councillor Gareth Wilson reminded the Committee that a solution for a similar situation in Littleport had worked, so this approach could be applied elsewhere.

The Chief Executive accepted that the principal of partnership working was a good model to follow. However, each of the other sites was different. Petitions had been submitted about the Littleport site, so this meant that someone in the community needed to galvanise support. It had been intended to roll out this type of scheme across the district.

Following Councillor Tony Parramint's question, the Principal Facilities & Asset Management Officer informed the Committee that an easement had been given to the owners over Council owned land, so this related to the owners and not the properties and so would not last forever.

- An emergency decision had been taken about the post office, as it was essential to keep it. The tenant was a private individual and not the Post Office itself. Unfortunately the payments for the rent due to the Council

had been behind with only some being paid. The Council had taken a robust attitude to this and had reduced the time allowed to pay the rent.

Councillor James Palmer left the meeting at this point, 4:14pm.

The Post Office had paid the tenant. The Council had to be robust in its dealings with the tenant. The current agreement would allow the car park to be used up until September. Any rental received from the post office should be included in the car parking budget.

Councillor James Palmer returned to the meeting at this point, 4:14pm.

57. **ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2013/14**

The Committee considered a report, reference N267, giving an update on the Asset Management Planned Maintenance Programme 2013/14 including spend to date.

The Principal Facilities & Asset Management Officer advised the Committee that not a great deal of maintenance had taken place since the last meeting. The final figure for maintenance over the year was around £170K. This had required a draw on the Reserves of £18K, which was significantly less than expected.

Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith asked whether anything was being done to address the deterioration of the gents' toilets in Ely, particular the ones near the Cathedral and on Palace Green. Not much money appeared to have been set aside for maintenance of public conveniences, but some were in a deplorable state.

Councillor Richard Hobbs was also concerned about this. Since withdrawing from a national competition on the standards of public toilets, standards had declined. This was no reflection of the Council's cleaning staff, who did a good job. When visitors came to the city they judged it on the standards of its toilets. All of them needed to be looked at as soon as possible, particularly as there was only a short time before the city's busiest period.

Councillor Gareth Wilson agreed that the toilets had to be up to standard, but they also had to be sign-posted so visitors knew where they were. The building and cleanliness of the one on the Green was not good. The work should be done immediately, but wondered when it would actually be done.

Councillor Kevin Ellis suggested that the Council should look to change them by fitting modern appliances so they ran more efficiently. Councillor James Palmer stated this had been done in Fenland, where the toilets were now immaculate. The service provided had to be looked at sensibly, as other facilities in other locations also had problems. Charging for the use of these could help keep them clean and tidy.

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that a number of reviews about the toilets had taken place, with only one success – the closing of the one at

Wicken Fen. In reality this service would be part of the new commercial services. Any further review would require decisions to be made. The Council had previously focussed on closing toilets but there was a whole range of other measures available, so a more holistic approach could be taken.

Councillor James Palmer left the meeting at this point, 4:28pm.

Councillor Bill Hunt thought the Chief Executive could be asked for a full report of the toilets, with a breakdown of each toilet showing its use, its current state, the cost to run it and the cost to bring it up to standard. This could then be brought back for a decision on where to go.

Councillor James Palmer returned to the meeting at this point, 4:29pm.

Councillor Hazel Williams suggested that local businesses, such as cafes and restaurants, should be contacted, as they provided toilets for their clients.

It was resolved:

That the updated Asset Maintenance Programme for 2013/14 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 be approved.

58. **ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME 2014/15**

The Committee considered a report, reference N268, previously circulated, which presented the proposed Asset Management Planned Maintenance Programme for 2014/15.

The Principal Facilities & Asset Management Officer advised the Committee that the report set out the planned programme for the year ahead. A number of issues were highlighted including: there would be significant maintenance costs for car parks; essential work was required for the filter at the Paradise Pool; money had been set aside for repairs to public footpaths; the boiler at The Grange needed replacing.

Councillor James Palmer queried the state of the boiler and it was revealed that it was at least 25 years old and the control panel needed looking at.

It was resolved:

That the proposed Asset Management Planned Maintenance Programme for 2014/15 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 be approved.

59. **FORWARD AGENDA PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its forward agenda programme, previously circulated.

Councillor Bill Hunt thought it would be very helpful if Members were fully aware of all the Council's assets, as this would help decide their best use.

Councillor James Palmer left the meeting at this point, 4:39pm.

Only recently a car park had been 'discovered' near his home that was owned by the Council. Therefore a request should be made for a real review of what the Council owned.

Councillor James Palmer rejoined the meeting at this point, 4:40pm.

Local Members should be asked to provide some input into this review.

Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith asked about progress on the ownership of the Market Place in Ely. The Senior Legal Assistant stated that the matter had been investigated and it appeared nobody owned it. Therefore the Council were seeking to obtain an 'adverse possession' of it. To do this the Council had to gather evidence to build a case. Extensive research had been undertaken via the County Council and the Cathedral and further work was in hand. The Council already had the legal right to hold markets, as this right had been passed to this Council by the previous one, Ely Urban Council.

The forward agenda plan was received.

60. **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. 10 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).

61. **ANGEL DROVE CAR PARK**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference N269, previously circulated, relating to Angel Drove Car Park in Ely.

The Head of Community Services noted that as there was a general lack of parking in the city, passenger growth was expected at the railway station and, as the Station Gateway Masterplan recognised the need for car parking, the Angel Drove Car Park had to be considered.

A number of options were outlined, with estimated financial appraisals, for the Committee to consider. The Committee debated these options and considered others before deciding to give further direction to the officers regarding the project.

It was resolved:

That further directions be given to officers with regard to the project.

62. **COUNCIL ASSET, LITTLEPORT**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference N270, previously circulated, relating to a Council asset in Littleport.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Committee about the current status of the Council asset and offered a number of options. In considering the strengths and weaknesses of each option, two options were recommended for further investigation.

The Committee debated the various options before concurring with the officer's recommendations and so gave further direction to the officers regarding the asset.

It was resolved:

That further directions be given to officers with regard to the project and report back.

63. **2013-14 ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference N271, previously circulated, giving an update on the Council's operational and non-operational assets.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee as to the current status of the assets within the development programme. The Committee were updated on the work that had been done and on the situation concerning one particular asset.

It was resolved:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Richard Hobbs left the meeting at this point, 5:26pm.

64. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 5:30pm.