

Minutes of a meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday 30th July 2014 at 4:00pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Councillor Lis Every
Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh
Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Hazel Williams, MBE (as Substitute for Councillor
Sheila Friend-Smith, MBE)
Councillor Pauline Wilson

OFFICERS

Kathy Batey – Head of HR & Facilities Management
Maggie Camp – Senior Legal Assistant
Katie Child – Principal Forward Planning Officer
Karen Freya – Principal Housing Officer (Strategy &
Development)
Tracey Harding – Team Leader, Tourism & Town Centre
Services
Darren Hill – Business Development Manager
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

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

Councillor Robert Stevens
Mr Gary Herbert, Stakeholder Manager, Post Office Ltd

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

4. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sheila Friend-Smith and Tony Goodge.

It was noted that Councillor Hazel Williams would substitute for Councillor Friend-Smith for the duration of this meeting.

The Chairman said this was an opportune moment to inform Members that Councillors Hazel Williams and Neil Morrison had been appointed as Liberal Democrat substitutes, and Councillor Derrick Beckett as the Independent substitute to this Sub-Committee. As yet, no appointments had been made in respect of the Conservative Group, and the Chairman requested that the

Principal Democratic Services Officer take up this matter with the Conservative Group Leader.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

6. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Sub-Committee was asked to note the Terms of Reference for the Asset Development Sub-Committee, which had been drafted in accordance with the delegated authority given to the Chief Executive and the Deputy Monitoring Officer at the Council meeting on 15th April 2014, to make any necessary amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference and any consequential amendments to the Constitution arising from the changes to the Committee structure.

A revised Terms of Reference was tabled at the meeting, and the Head of HR & Facilities Management asked Members to note that the reference to Service Delivery Champions had been removed as Champions had already been appointed by the parent Committee (Commercial Services Committee). Many Officers also fed into the process so should an issue need to be dealt with on grounds of urgency, the appropriate Service Delivery Champion would be consulted.

Drawing Members' attention to the list of Officers having delegated authority, the Chairman remarked that the provision for them to act on grounds of urgency should only ever be used in exceptional circumstances and wherever possible there would be consultation.

It was resolved:

That the revised Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee, as tabled at the meeting, be noted.

7. **MINUTES – 15th May 2014**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

8. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman announced that he would be issuing a map for each Ward in the District, showing the areas of land currently owned by the Authority. Members were asked to consider the maps so that they could give their thoughts on how the land might be best used for the benefit of the people of the District;

- A report on the Angel Drove Car Park would be brought to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee;

(Councillor Williams joined the meeting at 4.07pm.)

9. **ELY POST OFFICE: PRESENTATION FROM MR GARY HERBERT, STAKEHOLDER MANAGER**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Gary Herbert, Stakeholder Manager addressed the Sub-Committee regarding Ely Post Office and made the following points:

- The mobile post office in the Newnham Street car park was only ever considered to be a temporary measure;
- Post Office Ltd is committed to providing a service in Ely. The current temporary premises has planning permission until 5th September 2014, and the company is seeking an extension to this;
- Many premises had been suggested, but it was not easy to find one that was suitable. Post Office Ltd works in a franchise environment, it does not own the premises;
- A proposal had been put forward to turn Unit 2, Central Hall, Ely into a post office and convenience store. The applicant had been interviewed and the business plan assessed, and the proposal seemed to be viable. This would be going out to consultation from 6th August until 17th September 2014;
- If the proposal went ahead, Ely would have a bright, modern new style of post office offering a full range of services. People would also benefit from longer opening hours, as it would be open Monday – Friday 6.00am – 8.00pm; Saturday 6.00am – 10.00pm, and Sunday 7.00am – 6.00pm.

Mr Herbert finished by saying that in the event that the proposal did not proceed, Post Office Ltd would have to consider its position. It would want to remain in the Newnham Street car park, but this would be subject to financial considerations. He then responded to comments and questions from Members.

Councillor Wilson remarked that the post office, when located in the High Street, had five positions but it was nothing unusual to have only one person on duty and queues stretching beyond the front door. People got so fed up with having to wait to be served that many of them would go away and not come back. In view of this, she sought assurances from Mr Herbert that the new post office would have enough staff to man the positions.

Mr Herbert replied that the person running the post office would have a contractual obligation regarding staffing. He added that people were no longer obliged to use the post office because they could obtain services elsewhere. As a result of this, custom had dropped and the workload had diminished. However, with the significantly longer opening hours and a seven days a week service, he did not think that lengthy queues would be a problem in the new post office.

Councillor Hobbs said he appreciated more and more as time went on the difficulties of trying to find someone to take on the post office. He asked if this was peculiar to Ely, or whether post offices were declining throughout the country. Mr Herbert responded, saying it was a very emotive subject and the problem was not just confined to Ely. The issue was that the public no longer really needed post offices, but they still wanted them.

In response to a question from Councillor Every, Mr Herbert confirmed that there were no existing retail outlets in Ely that wanted to take on the post office but the new business was looking to open in October 2014.

In thanking Mr Herbert for his presentation, the Chairman said it was fair to say that the Authority wanted the Newnham Street car park back for parking. He expressed the hope that the situation would soon be resolved and that something would happen sooner rather than later.

It was resolved:

That the presentation, and the comments made thereon, be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report, reference P53, 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 Head of HR & Facilities Management summarised the key points of the report, drawing Members' attention to Appendix 1, which set out the Maintenance Programme for 2014/15, and Appendix 2 which detailed the revised Programme as at 30th June 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 £36,330, representing 14% of total estimated maintenance programme costs;
- Tender process completed for the resurfacing repairs to The Grange, Forehill and Littleport car parks;
- Tender process complete for the repairs to footpath along Palace Green, Ely;
- Refurbishment (one out of two) sand filters at Paradise Swimming Pool;
- Replacement of gate and damaged fencing at Morley Drive Play Area, Ely.

The Head of HR & Facilities Management said that the programme had been reviewed to see which works could be deferred and the following were recommended:

- Littleport Depot, redecoration at an estimated cost of £1,000 – to be deferred until 2015/16, as no longer a priority for this year;
- Public conveniences, refurbishment of one toilet block per annum at an estimated cost of £20,000 – to be deferred pending the review of public conveniences by the Commercial Services Committee;
- Replacement of car park barrier at The Grange at an estimated cost of £2,000 – to be deferred until 2015/16 as in-house interim works have been completed;
- St John's Road Garages, replace guttering at an estimated cost of £1,500 – to be removed from the programme and reconsidered at a later date if appropriate.

With regard to the public conveniences, Councillor Hobbs said it was his understanding that certain conveniences were below standard and would be brought up to standard prior to the review being carried out. Whilst agreeing with what Councillor Hobbs was saying, Councillor Williams felt that common sense should be used because it would be foolish to do up the worst one when the review might decide that it was not necessary. Councillor Hobbs responded, saying that the conveniences on the Palace Green were the most used, but they were the most appalling ones and should at least be brought up to a clean standard. A small amount of refurbishment should be carried out as soon as possible and the Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer was already on board regarding those to be done.

In connection with this, the Chairman duly proposed and the Sub-Committee agreed that the recommendation, as set out in the report should be accepted, but that emergency works should be carried out on the Palace Green public conveniences to bring them up to an acceptable standard.

With regard to the Wentworth Travellers Site, the Chairman requested that Officers bring a full detailed report, including costs, to the next meeting.

It was resolved:

1. That the Asset Maintenance Programme for 2014/15, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted;
2. That the actual spend to the end of June 2014, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be noted;
3. That the recommended changes to the Maintenance Plan, as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report, be approved, but with emergency works to be carried out to the Palace Green Public Conveniences to bring them up to an acceptable standard of use.

11. **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).

12. **ANCIENT MEADOWS, BOTTISHAM**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference P54, previously circulated, relating to Ancient Meadows, Bottisham.

The Principal Forward Planning Officer summarised the main points of her report which set out the background to the issue, the options available to Members, the costs, and the risks to be considered when making their decision.

It was resolved:

That Officers be given direction regarding Ancient Meadows, Bottisham

13. **ASSETBANK**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference P55, previously circulated, regarding Assetbank.

The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Development) summarised the main points of the report and drew Members' attention to the recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2.1 (i) – (iii).

It was resolved:

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

14. **2014-15 ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee considered an Exempt report, reference P56, previously circulated, which gave an update on the Council's operational and non-operational assets.

The Head of HR & Facilities Management advised the Committee as to the current status of the assets within the development programme and the Business Development Manager commented on the situation concerning one particular asset.

It was resolved:

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

15. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

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

The Chairman asked that, if possible, a report be brought to the October meeting regarding a particular asset. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the Exempt Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5:52pm.