

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Tuesday, 12th April 2016 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Chairman)
Councillor Allen Alderson
Councillor Steve Cheetham
Councillor Lorna Dupré
Councillor Lis Every
Councillor Coralie Green
Councillor Mark Hugo
Councillor Andy Pearson
Councillor Dan Schumann
Councillor Stuart Smith

OFFICERS

Nick Ball – Neighbourhood Support Officer
Lewis Bage – Project & Engagement Officer
Emma Grima – Director Commercial
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Granville Hawkes, Voluntary & Community Action East Cambs.
Ms Lynne Rawlings, Citizens Advice Newmarket
3 members of the public attended the meeting

The Chairman announced that agenda item number 8, relating to the Off Street Parking Places Order, had been withdrawn. The reason was due to the communications received after the consultation period that needed to be explored. This issue would be brought back to the Committee at a later date.

Councillor Allen Alderson joined the meeting at this point, 4:31pm.

64. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following question was received from Leslie Bishop:

In the light of the fact that Cresswell Lane has double yellow lines and no turning space for coaches and the adjoining road Lisle Lane has recently had double yellow lines installed because of traffic flow problems, presumably after a detailed health and safety assessment, and that substantial building work is to take place in Lisle Lane, how can it be safe to allow coaches to park in Cresswell Lane, a busy industrial area, with the Riverside used by walkers and Sainsbury's customers using their car

park at risk, when there is good safe coach parking available at Barton Road?

The Director Commercial answered on behalf of the Chairman and advised that the Council was the landowner for Cresswells Lane and had employed an independent consultant to locate a safe and appropriate place for coach parking. The Highways Department had been consulted and had given its consent to that location. Full details could be provided.

The following question was received from Gillian Turberfield:

Re the Tourism and Town Centre Manager's recommendations to the Council for proposed parking of coaches in Cresswell's Lane, which has clearly been prompted by the Council's proposal that planning permission be granted for the building of houses on Barton Road car and coach park, I ask why the Council is not considering the whole question of the new houses and the alternative coach parking as one planning issue. I wrote to the Chief Planning Officer, Mr Andrew Phillips, on 20 January 2016 urging the loss of that coach park would have serious implications for traffic flow, congestion at traffic lights and pedestrian safety. So what is the full meaning of "the statutory response from Highways confirms they have no objections"? They have not had time to conduct their proper surveys listed above, so is their lack of objection simply due to shortage of time and resources? Will the Council confirm that before this proposal is reconsidered, as it needs to be, due time and resources will be granted and that public consultation, will be extended to await the results, including that with Sainsbury's, who themselves may have their own objections if they pursue their plan to build a petrol station on the approaches to Cresswell's Lane?

The Director Commercial stated that a written response to those questions would be provided. Some of the matters raised would be taken into consideration as part of the planning application. The coach collection and drop-off point would still remain in Barton Road, there was no intention to remove it, and Cresswells Lane would only be used for coach parking.

Gillian Turberfield asked a further question:

Would the public be consulted on the parking order?

The Committee was advised that the public consultation on that had already closed. With regards Barton Road, a public exhibition would be held between 19th and 21st May on the proposed housing development.

The following question was received from Michelle Wolfe:

What direct advantages does this Council envisage for Ely residents, businesses and visitors in siting a coach park at Cresswells Lane as opposed to Barton Road (currently threatened with closure), where the phrase 'direct advantages' does not include the freeing-up of the Barton Road Coach park site to generate income for other Council projects?

As Ms Wolfe was not in attendance a written reply would be provided.

64. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lavinia Edwards.

65. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

66. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

67. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised the Committee that the cinema site was moving on very quickly. It was anticipated that the first franchise would be open by the end of October with the cinema scheduled to open on 14th February 2017.

68. **CITIZENS ADVICE NEWMARKET**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Lynne Rawlings, Manager of Citizens Advice Newmarket, gave a short presentation.

Citizens Advice Newmarket was a member of the national body and had adopted its standards. A recent upgrade now allowed case work to be dealt with and the office had between 2000 and 2500 clients. Some of these tended to be repeat clients, such as those who were severely disabled. For the year 2014-15 £390K of benefits were used to help cover cuts in Government spending. £78K of that had been used to prevent homelessness. The monetary figures demonstrated the work done but did not reflect the other outcomes, for example, where reliable advice was provided. If people did not seek advice from the service they would seek other sources, such as the internet or friends and family. The advice from these other sources was not reliable and could cost the client time and money, as there were some dubious companies offering poor advice.

An integrated service was provided, including taking telephone calls to give first contact advice. So the service could be contacted without too much trouble. Of the client group, 25% came from the villages in East Cambridgeshire. This covered all villages from the larger ones such as Burwell to the smaller ones like Swaffham Bulbeck.

A lot of people were struggling following the introduction of universal credit, as some were now not entitled to some benefits. When they came to the service, help was offered so they could manage their money better. The staff had been trained and were monitored so that greater value could be added to the service and advice imparted to the clients.

Funding was received from the District Council and this helped stabilise the business and enabled other funding to be raised. This support was much appreciated, as without it the service would suffer some uncertainty and would make things difficult.

Councillor Richard Hobbs noted that the offices were situated off the main street and queried whether they were sufficient to provide a 'hands-on' service. Lynne Rawlings informed the Committee that 40% of their clients were severely disabled and needed face-to-face contact. It was hoped to move to new building shortly. This could mean an extension to the opening hours and improving access to the service.

Councillor Allen Alderson asked how much financial support the District Council gave to the organisation. The Project and Enforcement Officer informed the Committee that it was currently £23K per year via a service level agreement.

Councillor Lorna Dupré queried whether the profile of the enquiries received had changed and whether there was a new focus for the service. Lynne Rawlings revealed that universal credit queries were being received relating to welfare benefits from people who had lost some benefits. Enquiries about credit card debt were falling, in part due to the budget advice being given. Clients in debt had been liable to not pay their council tax and this had been exacerbated by some people receiving council tax bills that they do not understand, as the bill itself was so complicated. Perhaps a summary sheet explaining what was owed would help.

69. **VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ACTION EAST CAMBS (VCAEC)**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Granville Hawkes, Project Development Manager of VCAEC, gave a short presentation.

Granville Hawkes explained that VCAEC supplied counselling and voluntary services and supported local organisations with advice. This advice and support covered a range of topics including funding raising, ensuring their policies were up-to-date, providing training and networking events and publishing a regular newsletter giving out relevant information.

There were two other similar organisations in Cambridgeshire and regular strategic meetings were held with the District Council or County Council.

The Ely Volunteer Centre comprised 2.2 full time staff with 60 volunteers, mostly long-term unemployed. It managed the Do It website giving details of volunteering opportunities. This helped manage volunteering through regular contact with online enquiries and assisting people who walked into the office.

Two main projects were run from the office: 'Helping Hands' and the 'Social Car Scheme'. 'Helping Hands' was a gardening scheme where a gardening team, comprising the long-term unemployed and people with learning difficulties, helped other people with their gardens. Last year 240 projects were undertaken and this had made a real difference to the clients. It cost £35K to run this per year and £15K came from clients' contributions.

The 'Social Car Scheme' involved 32 volunteer drivers throughout East Cambridgeshire who used their own vehicles to ferry people around. 70% of the journeys were health related, such as hospital visits, doctors' appointments, clinic attendance and trips to pharmacies. Over the last year 7000 hours had been donated by the drivers, completing 2370 journeys covering 110K miles.

Other tasks completed included involvement with the recent 'litter pick' in Ely, where 50 people took part, and a county-wide event held at The Maltings. There also an idea to create a database of the 1500 people expressing an interest in volunteering, but not on a regular basis, so they could be called upon on an ad-hoc basis where needed.

Future priorities included looking at a booking system for the Social Car Scheme, as it was currently paper-based, to improve the scheme and cut down on mistakes. Helping Hands was also a funding priority along with seeking other income opportunities. The District Council gave a grant of £19K annually and this helped to provide returns of £282K for work carried out.

Councillor Allen Alderson asked whether the volunteers took more than one trip per day. Some doctor's surgeries used their own drivers so did VCAEC work with them as well? The Committee was informed that this did happen, for example if somebody had to go to Addenbrookes hospital and spent some time there if they had several appointments on the same day. On other trips a volunteer may only do a short trip, which meant that they were available later that day for another trip. Doctors' surgeries were supplied with VCAEC leaflets so, although they tended to use their own drivers first, they did have the information to pass to their customers.

Councillor Lorna Dupré wanted to know whether the car scheme was linked in to the total transport scheme. It was revealed that VCAEC had attended three meetings with the County Council and had talked about the draft plan. It had certain synergies with the VCAEC scheme but would require a bid to be made for the contract.

Councillor Lis Every did not think that the work done should be underestimated. Funding came from the District and County Councils but the County Council funding regime was changing so did that mean that bids for it had to be made? This was confirmed as correct. The County Council contract for support for the infrastructure of voluntary agencies was going through the procurement process. The contract could go out to other organisations which VCAEC was not part of or it could go outside of the county, so this was a threat to VCAEC.

VCAEC used the funding it received on managing the car and Helping Hand schemes but had been given notice that the subsidy from the County Council could be cut. This put these schemes under threat and only allowed VCAEC to plan for six months ahead.

In response to Councillor Andy Pearson's question, the organisation had applied to be a frontline service for vehicle licensing checking but had been rejected. The Huntingdonshire Forum had succeeded for the work county-wide and had sub-contracted some of this to VCAEC. However, VCAEC would

withdrawn from offering this service because it was not generating any income as the rewards were very small and the numbers dealt with miniscule.

70. **SIX MONTH UPDATE ON RIVERSIDE MANAGEMENT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report Q247, previously circulated, which gave an update on the Ely Riverside mooring management for the period of September 2015 – March 2016.

The Community Project and Engagement Officer reminded the Committee that the mooring scheme had been launched in September 2015 and the report gave a six monthly update on progress.

All vessels mooring had to enter into a contract with the Council, which employed two riverside officers to log the vessels mooring. Any breaking of contracts meant a Mooring Charge Notice was handed out and so far 22 had been issued.

A lot of consultation had taken place, including a stakeholders meeting, about the use of the riverside and the feedback had been used to improve it. This had led to dredging of the river to help increase mooring capacity and including the slipway and Willow Walk within the Management Scheme. Now there was a regular turnover of boats and only one commercial space, rather than two as before. The riverside would be monitored over the coming summer season and other improvements would be made, including improved signage.

Councillor Richard Hobbs acknowledged that a lot of work had been done. The consultation meeting had demonstrated that the stakeholders had been pleased with the Council's efforts and could look forward in seeing the outcome over the summer.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the update and consultation findings regarding the Council's mooring enforcement scheme be noted;
- (ii) That the plans for further improvement of the riverside area be noted.

71. **COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN 2016/17**

The Committee received a report Q248, previously circulated, which presented the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Plan for 2016/17.

The Neighbourhood Support Officer advised the Committee that during that morning the Community Safety Partnership had endorsed the Plan at its Board meeting. This had been attended by the Vice Chairman of this Committee and representatives of the Police Service, Fire Service and Sanctuary Housing. The Plan had been well received and commended.

There was a requirement to produce the Action Plan and it looked three years ahead in an attempt to build in some stability. The Council worked closely with

the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, which had also supported the Plan. It had three priorities, based on Police priorities, which concerned 'threat', 'risk' and 'harm'. These would be tackled by stopping offending early and through community engagement.

Councillor Richard Hobs noted that the relationship between the Police and the Council was strong. Councillor Lis Every congratulated the officer on the work done to produce the Plan. It was very valuable to have cross-agency working, as all contributed to the common cause. Thanks were offered to the Panel for its help at the parish level.

It was resolved:

That the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Plan for 2016/17 be noted.

72. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received the previously circulated Commercial Services Forward Agenda Plan.

The meeting closed at 6:38pm.