



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services  
Committee held in the Council Chamber,  
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday,  
13<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 5.30pm

### **P R E S E N T**

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Chairman)  
Councillor Allen Alderson  
Councillor Lavinia Edwards  
Councillor Lis Every  
Councillor Tony Goodge  
Councillor Bill Hunt  
Councillor Tom Kerby  
Councillor Neil Morrison (Substitute for Councillor Sheila Friend-  
Smith, MBE)  
Councillor James Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Elaine  
Griffin-Singh)  
Councillor Hazel Williams, MBE  
Councillor Pauline Wilson

### **OFFICERS**

Allison Conder – Principal Community & Leisure Services  
Officer  
Lewis Bage – Community Development Officer  
Spencer Clark – Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer  
Julie Cornwell – Partnerships Officer  
Emma Grima – Corporate Unit Manager  
John Hill – Chief Executive  
Tony Langley – Accountancy Assistant  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr Granville Hawkes – Chief Operating Officer, VCAEC  
Mr Tom Pinnington – The Sports Consultancy (Agenda Item  
No.7)  
Mr Toby Wintgens – The Sports Consultancy (Agenda Item No  
7)

#### 51. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

#### 52. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elaine Griffin-Singh, and Sheila Friend-Smith, MBE.

It was noted that Councillor James Palmer would substitute for Councillor Griffin-Singh, and Councillor Neil Morrison for Councillor Friend-Smith for the duration of this meeting.

53. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Williams declared an interest in Agenda Item No 8, being a Board Member of the Bottisham Sports Centre.

Councillor Palmer declared an interest in Agenda Item No 8, saying that he was about to renew his membership of the Soham Sports Association.

54. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman announced that the Paradise Pool had reached 200,000 visits per year.

There had been a 20% increase in participation at the pool since SLM took over in July 2012 and over 1,500 swimmers every week were now taking part in the swimming lesson programme. Last year 96% of customers rated their experience of using the facility as excellent, and the ratio of complaints to user was at just 0.02%.

The SLM team had worked very hard to turn around the reputation of the pool since 2012, by providing excellent service delivery, pride in their achievements and improved changing and reception facilities.

The Committee would later hear about the results of work to undertake an audit of all the indoor sports facilities in the District and the action plan that would ensure the Authority was providing the right facilities in the right place in a cost effective way. This was vital planning work to shape the planning of indoor leisure service provision into the longer term.

Paradise Pool was currently operating at 97% capacity when 70% was the usual comfort level. SLM had said their biggest challenges were managing the strain on limited pool availability to continue to meet the community's needs and the impact of this volume of users in being able to maintain the quality of an ageing facility.

- The Chairman said he was pleased to report that in addition to achieving Green Flag status for the first time in 2014, the Country Park had now been accredited by Natural England and was just 1 of 7 accredited country parks in the East of England. This national

accreditation scheme was further recognition of the Park's high quality facilities and services; it demonstrated the ongoing commitment and work of so many different people from within both the Council and community to improve the country park to such a high standard.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman congratulated Allison Conder, Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer, and Spencer Clark, Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer, for all their hard work, and he asked that Mr Spencer pass on the thanks of the Committee to his team.

- The Chairman announced that two consultation questionnaires had been issued about adopting a civil enforcement approach, based on contract law, to enforce a period of visitor mooring at the ECDC owned moorings at Ely Riverside.

The questionnaires sought the views of boaters on the options to cover the costs and whether they would make use of any of the proposed options. They also sought the views of residents, local businesses and other stakeholders on the options to cover the costs of the contract law approach.

The consultation period would end on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and the results would be presented at a stakeholder meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January, and at the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. To date, over 500 responses had been received.

The decision about how the Council will manage its moorings would be made at the Commercial Services meeting in March, with the preferred option being implemented by the summer of 2015.

- ECDC had been approached by Network Rail, seeking permission to erect a pontoon at Willow Walk for 6 weeks from 1<sup>st</sup> April, to enable essential repairs to be carried out to the rail tracks on the bridge over the Riverside.
- The Authority had also been approached by The Boatyard, 1 Annesdale, seeking a licence for a pontoon that will protrude onto a small section of riverside owned by ECDC. If the Authority was willing to issue a licence, The Boatyard would proceed with a planning application and approval from the Environment Agency for their new business venture.
- The Chairman informed Members that the latest Volume & Value Tourism Report had been received. It showed that in 2013, there were 3.4 million trips to the District worth £182 million to the local economy, with the tourism industry directly employing 3,335 people. This compared with 2.6 million trips, worth £164 million in 2010. There would be a press release to publicise this good news.
- Oliver Cromwell's House had just received its annual Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme Assessment and had once again passed. In addition, due to its high score the House had been nominated for Visit England's "Hidden Gem" accolade. This was a new award that aimed to acknowledge smaller attractions and raise their profile. There would be

a further assessment and the outcome would be known in the summer. The Chairman wished the team every success.

- Members' attention was drawn to the tabled leaflet "How safe is your playground". It was noted that the Parks & Open Spaces Service team was now RoSPA accredited and could offer Parish Councils and others their expertise to carry out inspections of playgrounds.

56. **VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ACTION EAST CAMBS: A PRESENTATION BY MR GRANVILLE HAWKES, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, VCAEC**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Hawkes to the meeting and invited him to address Members.

Mr Hawkes commenced by saying that VCAEC was only one of two or three organisations that the District Council continued to fund, and knowing how difficult times were, he thanked Members for their support.

VCAEC was an independent registered charity set up as an infrastructure and networking organisation to provide help, guidance and support to community and voluntary groups in the East Cambridgeshire District. It was part of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) which represented the voluntary sector across the county, and it operated the Ely & District Volunteer Centre.

The organisation was based in Ely; most of the services were free to members, and as part of the CVS, offered in East Cambridgeshire the following:

- Funding advice to member groups and support to members applying for funding;
- Support and guidance on governance, setting up a voluntary organisation and appropriate policies;
- How to find training needs and providing training to member groups;
- Excellent networking opportunities.

It was noted that Mr Hawkes attended various meetings in his CVS role to ensure that the voluntary sector was represented at a number of groups and partnerships. This included the Primary Care & Community Steering Group (local), East Cambs Learning Disability Partnership (local), Warm Homes Healthy People Steering Group (CVS), and the Cambridge & Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (CVS).

The Volunteer Centre was open to the public four days per week, although it was effectively open Monday to Friday. There was a part time development worker and a full time supervisor for the gardening team. The various operations were undertaken with a team of 50 volunteers and the main functions were:

- Do-it Volunteering Site – administration of the site for East Cambridgeshire so that their voluntary groups were able to advertise volunteering opportunities on the internet. Support was also given to potential volunteers by matching their interests to the opportunities available. Generally some 80 volunteers were placed per annum, all of whom added value back into the community which was not evaluated in VCAEC's figures;
- East Cambs Social Car Scheme – the project had been running for a number of years, and operated with 25 volunteer drivers who used their own cars. The service was available to people who did not have access to their own or public transport, or they had a physical impairment which limited mobility. The most popular journeys were to local hospitals, doctor's surgeries and shopping trips but regular day care journeys were also undertaken. An average of 80,000 miles per annum was completed across 2,900 journeys and it was estimated that this added value back into the community of £80,000 per annum.

Mr Hawkes added that he was aware of the situation with Ely & Soham Dial a Ride (ESDAR) and he had attended an initial meeting with them, as their potential closure would have a major impact on the Social Car Scheme.

- Helping Hands Gardening Project – the scheme was originally set up in 1996 and was awarded a group MBE in 2007, as winners of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The scheme provided gardening services to people who would not otherwise get their garden done. This was especially beneficial to the elderly, the disabled or those having suffered a trauma. A voluntary donation was requested, but the service was free to those in particular need.

The volunteers were long term unemployed, socially excluded or had learning difficulties. Over the past 4 years, the scheme had involved 40 volunteers and helped 11 into employment, to further education and one had started his own gardening business. On average, 200 projects per year were completed, ranging from maintenance to complete garden makeovers, adding approximately £55,000 value back into the community.

The benefits of the project were endless to the volunteers, giving them and the users of the scheme a feeling of wellbeing. Referrals were received from Sanctuary Housing, ECDC, the local Police, community groups, the health profession and users' neighbours.

With regard to funding Mr Hawkes stated that VCAEC received £20,000 per annum from Cambridgeshire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, and £20,000 from ECDC to enable core functions to be undertaken effectively. The projects also needed to produce a surplus that helped to meet the operating costs of the volunteer centre.

It was estimated that over the last few years this investment had produced the following annual return back into the community:

- 2012/13 - £267,000
- 2013/14 - £246,000
- 2014/15 - £280,000 (projection base on current figures)

This total was mainly made up of the number of volunteer hours multiplied by £12 per hour, the industry standard for volunteering.

Mr Hawkes concluded his presentation by speaking about the future of VCAEC. As an organisation, it needed to become more sustainable and less reliant on third party funding. In 2016/17 it would be working to a reduced budget, so its projects would need to provide more income. It would have to continue to demonstrate value for money in all its activities and ensure that its priority activities matched the objectives of its funders.

There being no questions from Members, the Chairman thanked Mr Hawkes for his presentation. He added that he knew the value of VCAEC's work in the community, he wished them every success and asked that the kind regards of the Committee be passed on to all the volunteers.

It was resolved:

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

57. **EAST CAMBS INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, reference P164, previously circulated, regarding a District wide indoor sports facility strategy and action plan.

The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer drew Members' attention to the tabled handout of a set of slides relating to the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy & Action Plan and the revised copy of Appendix 2 to the report. She also introduced Tom Pinnington and Toby Wintgens from The Sports Consultancy.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Pinnington, addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- i. He had been working on the audit of needs over the last six months to review the age, quality, size, accessibility, community use, opening hours and type of management of each existing facility. The focus was on indoor sports facilities, taking account of the needs of the current and future population growth, and having been done in conjunction with the feasibility work into the new Ely indoor leisure centre;
- ii. The methodology followed was compliant with that recommended by Sport England and covered all indoor sports facilities including: swimming pools, sports halls, health & fitness suites, indoor bowls, squash courts, studios and indoor tennis courts.

- iii. Evidence was gathered through the use of facilities planning modelling data from Sport England,, facility site inspections and stakeholder feedback, and consultation with over 60 individuals and organisations.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Wintgens addressed Members. He spoke of the needs assessment report, saying that there was a keen focus on sustainability. The Strategy & Action Plan detailed recommendations for current and future provision of indoor sports facilities in East Cambridgeshire. The Strategy period ran from 2014 to 2026, with the planning horizon available for Sport England's modelling tools.

He drew Members' attention to page 5 of the handout which gave details of the evidence base. With regard to the element in respect of neighbouring authorities, the response from Forest Heath District Council had been particularly important.

The findings of the consultation and research clearly identified three key drivers for the Strategy:

- i. Population growth – the population had increased significantly in recent years and growth was expected to continue to increase to 103,700 by 2026;
- ii. Participation in sport – people in East Cambridgeshire were less physically active than the regional and national averages. This incurred additional health care costs of just over £1.3 million per annum due to inactivity;
- iii. Supply of facilities meets the demand – address issues where current capacity is not meeting current demand and there is a surplus or a shortfall identified in some areas of over or undersupply relative to demand.

Mr Wintgens concluded by reminding Members that the Strategy would help the leisure stakeholders by delivering eight key objectives, which were set out on page 3 of the revised Appendix 2 of the report. The Action Plan had been developed to address the identified needs of each facility type and which of the eight key objectives each action met. It was noted that the priorities were set out under the following headings:

- General Strategic Priorities
- Swimming Pool Priorities
- Sports Hall Priorities
- Health & Fitness Priorities
- Indoor Bowls, Squash Court, Studio & Indoor Tennis Priorities.

The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer thanked The Sports Consultancy for producing such a comprehensive assessment. It was, she said, a critical part of the work looking at the feasibility of a new indoor leisure centre to serve the District and based in Ely, as the needs assessment identifies the need for additional swimming space, health and fitness and

studio provision to accommodate existing shortfalls and future growth needs. Officers were now working on the most cost effective method of delivery for a new indoor sports facility.

With regard to the revised version of Appendix 2, Members were asked to note that only pages 14 – 17 had been revised.

The Strategy highlighted that the percentage of the adult population in the District that were satisfied with sports provision in their local area had decreased in the last five years. Only 19% of indoor sports facilities assessed achieved an “excellent” quality rating and if Newmarket Leisure Centre is removed from the assessment, then this falls to 6%. Many indoor leisure facilities are over 30 years old and most of the Leisure Trusts are not able to generate sufficient surpluses to drive refurbishment and redevelopment and keep pace with customer expectations and changing demands.

The Strategy & Action Plan acknowledged that the District Council was only one stakeholder and that all partners involved in indoor sports provision would need to work together to take the Strategy through to implementation. Although a new District leisure centre will address the key shortfalls in indoor sports provision up to 2016, it will not address issues relating to the quality of provision within the existing indoor sports facilities and decreasing satisfaction levels. There had been a history of under investment in the majority of the indoor sports facilities and there was a need to develop costed strategic facility priorities that focused on driving up participation and improving the viability of centres.

There was also a need to look at options around the management arrangements of existing facilities to see if there were any alternative arrangements that could improve viability. The Council should facilitate joint working to review the opportunities that could come from the facilities working more collaboratively in future, and the management arrangements that might be required to support this.

Members were reminded that the Authority had a key role to play in facilitating the work needed to take the indoor sports facility strategy through to implementation. The work would be significant and delivery would require additional skills and resources within the Community & Leisure Services Team, and these would need to be considered by the Stage 2 service review report for Sport & Health Development Services.

Referring to the provision standards for studios as opposed to health & fitness suites, Councillor Williams commented that a studio was essentially a room and the District had lots of village halls that did the same job. Mr Pinnington replied that ideally a studio would have a sprung floor, but if one was not provided, other flexible spaces could be used.

Councillor Wilson was pleased to see that the Strategy & Action Plan would protect the other sports halls and it was nice to see the villages being mentioned. She enquired how many people used the current facilities between 9.00am and 4.00pm and Mr Pinnington responded by saying that multi-purpose community halls were not within the scope of The Sports Consultancy’s work, as they are not dedicated indoor sports facilities, although they do make an important contribution as community activity space.



In response to a question from Councillor Palmer, Mr Pinnington confirmed that at present, the facilities in East Cambridgeshire were insufficient, and that the planned leisure centre would bring the District up to sufficiency, and would not affect the other facilities across the District. Councillor Palmer said this was a very political situation, as the proposed leisure centre did not meet with universal approval; it could be suggested that the findings of this report were convenient for the leading Group. Mr Pinnington replied that this was not something his company would take into consideration.

Councillor Goodge commended the report, saying that he had initially been concerned about the other facilities, but it had put him at ease that they would suffer no detriment. He felt more confident regarding the need of Ely in the long term. However, he still had some concerns regarding the finances for the new leisure centre, particularly the cost over the period of time, and the impact on other businesses such as The Atrium. The Chairman replied that everyone had those concerns, and Mr Pinnington added that The Atrium had been invited to the stakeholder meetings but had declined to attend.

Councillor Kerby, referring to paragraph 5.2 of the report, asked what would be required to move implementation forward. The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer said that joint stakeholder working groups should be set up to facilitate the joint working required, and she cautioned that this would be a really significant piece of work.

Councillor Morrison raised the issue of footfall and usage at the Littleport Sport & Leisure Community Centre. He was sure Members were aware of the Littleport Parish Council press release, and said he was unhappy because there had been a lack of any consultation regarding the last County Council meeting, and the County was being very tight-lipped. The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer informed Members that this Authority had supported the County Council's planning for the future of Littleport Leisure Centre by contributing to an assessment of indoor sports facilities needs, and had offered to support the County in liaison with the community and Parish, but the County Council had very much wanted to lead this as part of the wider consultation on the new school provision. but they had declined and had used separate consultants. The needs analysis document was in the public domain and she could therefore provide them with the details.

Councillor Williams reiterated that the Committee should not underestimate the problems and time it would take to get the leisure providers to work together. If two or three could be brought on board, then others might follow, but it was not just about money.

Councillor Every offered her congratulations on what she thought to be a very comprehensive report. She endorsed Councillor Williams' remarks, adding that things should be taken very carefully.

The Chairman agreed that the report had been really very helpful, and the challenge would be to get all the facilities to work together. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

- i. To endorse the key findings of the needs assessment and recommendations within the Action Plan;
- ii. To task the Sport & Health Development Service Review group to consider the skills and technical expertise required to deliver the action plan. Recommendations to be included within the Stage 2 service report to be presented to Commercial Services Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015;
- iii. To instruct the Corporate Unit Manager to include indoor sports facility projects within the District (where it is demonstrated that investment would increase participation and sustainability), as part of the current public consultation for the amended CIL Regulation 123 list, for consideration at Full Council in February 2015;

**It was further resolved:**

- iv. **To recommend to Council that the Indoor Sports Facility Needs Assessment & Strategy and related action plan should form part of the evidence base for a future Local Plan Review, and review of the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning document.**

58. **LEISURE CENTRE & SPORT FACILITIES SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING 2015/16**

The Committee received a report, reference P165, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to agree funding allocations for the 2015/16 financial year for leisure centres and sports facilities.

Members' attention was drawn to the following revised motion, which was tabled at the meeting:

*Recommendation:*

- (i) *Approve the overall allocation of £27,232 for leisure centres and sports facilities in 2015/16;*
- (ii) *Defer the consideration of grant awards to specific leisure and sports facilities until the next meeting to enable the Committee to fully assess the implications of the East Cambs Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan.*

In proposing the motion, Councillor Hunt said that although the Committee was being asked to approve the same figure, he did not think it was helpful to just hand out the same amounts to the facilities as they had received last year. He was proposing that the "pot" be retained and Members should look at the best ways to get best value to help the recipients.

Councillor Williams said she did not disagree with this principle, but she had concerns about how it would be decided who needed the most funding. She felt that Members should be aware of the decision making process, as the needs of each facility would have to be assessed before coming to Committee.

Councillor Goodge thought that Councillor Hunt's reasoning was along the right lines, but said there had to be consistency in the formula, otherwise it could be open to misuse.

Councillor Williams continued, saying that the sports facilities would be having the rug pulled out from under them, because this revenue funding was to help them keep going. They needed certainty and making them wait until the Committee meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to find out what funding they would be awarded would not give them much time before the start of the next financial year.

Councillor Palmer, in seconding the revised motion, said he could understand where Councillor Williams was coming from. There were times when a sports facility needed new equipment and approached the Authority for help. By helping them out, the facility could, in turn, make more money and would then need less funding from the Council in future years. This revised motion would give the opportunity to help those facilities which were most in need. It was not taking away from the District, but giving to those who were less financially viable.

Councillor Wilson made the point that this approach might just cover the costs for three or four of the facilities, but she wondered what would be done about the others. Councillor Palmer replied that there were other ways to help and maybe something could be done with S106 money, as not all parishes were helping with this.

Councillor Goodge responded by saying he thought that the leading Group was trying to do everything on the hoof, and more thought should be given to the matter. He believed it would be better to stay with the original proposal and change things in the following year. Councillor Hunt disagreed, saying that it was a common sense approach. Members had a responsibility to the taxpayers and this would offer best value.

When put to the vote,

It was resolved:

- i. To approve the overall allocation of £27,232 for leisure centres and sports facilities in 2015/16.
- ii. To defer the consideration of grant awards to specific leisure and sports facilities until the next meeting to enable the Committee to fully assess the implications of the East Cambs Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan.

## 59. **REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Committee received a report, reference P166, previously circulated, from which Members were requested to approve the Terms of Reference and the timetable for the proposed review of public conveniences within the District.

The Corporate Unit Manager introduced her report by drawing Members' attention to paragraph 2.1 of Appendix 1, which set out the membership of the working group, and the scope of the work to be

undertaken. It was noted that the purpose of the review was to identify the following:

- Cost analysis of the service;
- Determine whether existing provisions are fit for purpose;
- Determine whether all of the public conveniences are required;
- Analyse the cost of improving and/or refurbishing the public conveniences;
- Consider any alternative delivery mechanisms;
- Identify and recommend any efficiency savings; and
- Explore potential income streams.

The Committee was asked to note that this review excluded Fountain Lane public conveniences in Soham.

The Corporate Unit Manager next highlighted paragraph 2.3.1 of Appendix 2, which detailed the current cost of the service in 2014/15. The Council employed eight cleaning operatives, four in Ely, three across the other areas and one casual worker.

Appendix 3 to the report set out the Statement of Consultation:

- Member Champion – Councillor Brown would assist the team in carrying out the review.
- Corporate Management Team – The Corporate Management Team would be updated monthly on the progress of the review.
- Users of the public conveniences – A survey would be completed by users at each of the locations.
- Members – A Member Seminar was to be held in March 2015, in addition to the formal Member process.
- Stakeholders – A presentation of the review would be carried out at the Parish Conference, and Officers would meet with the affected Parish Councils.

Members noted that a report would be brought back to the Commercial Services Committee in July 2015.

During the course of discussion, Councillor Wilson raised the issue of better signage for the public conveniences and she suggested that this should be added to the recommendation. The Chief Executive said this would be included in the Stage 1 report rather than amending the recommendation.

Councillor Wilson then went on to say that she thought it ridiculous that the Authority offered free parking in the District but people might have to pay to use the public conveniences.

Councillor Goodge expressed concern about the costing of the service, and wished to know if it included the establishment costs and the Authority's on-costs; he was informed that in both cases it did.

Councillor Hunt said he shared Councillor Goodge's concerns and it would be important to ascertain exactly what was what. The Council had something like £1 million of assets, which were costing just over £200,000 per annum to run and in the meantime complaints had been received regarding the quality of some of the conveniences. The review would look at everything, including signage and nothing would be ruled in or out. Everything would be discussed, especially with the public.

Councillor Williams was happy to hear of the proposed approach to the review. She reminded Members that, in the past, the Authority had won awards for its conveniences and had often received letters from the public, praising their quality. She also noted that the Parish councils would be consulted as part of the process.

It was resolved:

To approve the terms of reference and timetable for the review of the public conveniences within the District.

#### 60. **ELY COUNTRY PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015 - 17**

The Committee considered a report, reference P167, previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on progress made with delivering Phase III of the Improvement Plan. The report also sought Member approval for a Phase IV Improvement Plan 2015 – 17.

The Community Development Officer introduced his report by drawing Members' attention to paragraph 3.3 of the report which contained a table showing the progress made with the third phase of improvements. It was noted that all the works were shaped by consultation with community groups, local schools, site users and local families.

He then went on to inform Members that 2014/15 had been a very successful year.

In August 2014 the Country Park obtained Green Flag status, thereby recognising that it was one of the best green spaces in the country. In December 2014, the Park became an "accredited country park", following a successful application to Natural England. Ely Country Park is now one of just seven such accredited country parks in the East of England.

Another major achievement was the negotiation of partnership working with Sainsbury's, with the following improvement works being agreed:

- Access improvements between the store car park and the Cresswells Lane entrance to the Country Park. Sainsbury's completed this work at their own cost in December 2014;
- Country Park promotional materials to be displayed in the Sainsbury's store;

- Regular litter picks to be carried out by Sainsbury's staff.

With regard to the Improvement Plan for 2015 – 17, the Community Development Officer said that four priority areas for improvement were proposed: an integrated pest management system, seasonal toilets, access improvements and an assessment of seating requirements.

The report set out the rationale for the improvements and the options available for addressing the priorities. It was noted that many of the proposals were flagged within the Green Flag feedback report and were essential to the Park retaining its Green Flag status for 2015/16.

Moving on to the financial implications, the Committee noted that a total project budget of £28,000 (based on estimated costs) would be required to deliver the Improvement Plan for 2015 – 17. £18,000 would be required from the District Council's S106 funding and £10,000 from the County Council's S106 funding, which would meet the full improvement works detailed for Springhead Lane.

The Chairman said it was nice to have such a success story which also highlighted the co-operation between the various departments.

In the course of discussion Councillor Wilson suggested that one way of addressing the seating requirements would be to allow memorial seating, as this would not be an expense to the Authority.

Councillor Hunt said he was "amazed and grateful" for what had been achieved in the Park; the Community Development Officer and the Senior Open Spaces & Maintenance Officer and his team all deserved a real pat on the back.

Councillor Goodge added his congratulations, saying that he went to the Park with his grandchildren and it was very well used. The facilities were excellent, but toilets were an absolute necessity. On this particular point, Councillor Kerby asked whether the cost of installing permanent toilets had been explored, as chemical ones could smell very unpleasant in the summer. The Chairman said that this would be reviewed when an update report came back to Committee in 2016.

Councillor Morrison noted that there was a pole for a CCTV camera in the Park, and he asked whether a camera had been installed. The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer reminded Members that the responsibility for CCTV coverage had now been handed over to the City of Ely Council and the camera would become integrated into a new wireless solution.

The Chairman wished it to be placed on record that everybody appreciated the work that had been carried out in the Country Park, especially with Sainsbury's, and he asked that the thanks of the Committee be conveyed to all concerned.

It was resolved:

- i. To note the progress update made with Phase III of the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2013-15;

- ii. To approve the Phase IV Ely Country Park improvement priorities for 2015-17 and authorise the Corporate Unit Manager to explore funding options from Section 106 funds;
- iii. To attend a site visit in July 2015 to view all works completed in Phase III of the Improvement Plan.

61. **GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

The Committee considered a report, reference P168, previously circulated, which asked Members to note the performance and emerging issues identified by three of the voluntary organisations funded by East Cambridgeshire District Council. Members were also asked to agree the proposed funding allocations for the 2015/16 financial year.

The Partnerships Officer said she did not propose to go through her report in fine detail, but rather she would touch on of some of the key performance highlights and emerging issues for each organisation:

- **Newmarket CAB** – The organisation had recently been awarded a grant of £137,261 from the Big Lottery “Reaching Communities” Fund. This was four years of funding for a Welfare Benefit & Money Advice project.

The Newmarket CAB had been part of a national “Mystery Shopper” pilot, which looked at the client experience, and as a consequence, it had been identified as a model of good practice.

Debt and welfare benefits continued to be the most frequent issues raised, representing 63% of the work carried out for East Cambridgeshire residents. Furthermore, the link between ill health and debt issues was becoming more prevalent.

- **Rural Cambs CAB (Ely Office)** – The Bureau had secured a new contract from the Money Advice Service for three years from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014, to provide a specialist debt adviser to support clients with unmanageable debts, thus helping to prevent homelessness or non payment of priority bills. There was a weekly debt advice clinic where clients could drop in to, to get instant help and support with debts.

The Bureau had seen an increased demand for all its debt advice services. It had started to introduce financial capability into its advice sessions and ran debt clinics which not only dealt with the debt but how to manage money going forward.

The rise in debt had resulted in an increase of the issuing of food vouchers to clients. The Rural Cambs office had issued 131 vouchers in the first six months of 2014/15, with demand increasing week on week.

- **Voluntary & Community Action East Cambs (VCAEC)** – The organisation offered training for 147 voluntary member groups on issues including safeguarding adults and child protection. It had placed

34 volunteers into local projects and businesses and had itself benefitted from 1370 hours of volunteer time to help run the organisation. The total added value of volunteering opportunities handled by VCAEC within East Cambridgeshire was £20,184 up to the end of September 2014.

The Social Car scheme was in great demand and had added £38,364 value to the service, up to the end of September 2014.

Between April and the end of September 2014, volunteers working on the Helping Hands gardening project had given 2,130 hours of their time to complete 96 jobs for 76 clients who would not have otherwise been able to get the work done. This had generated added value of £25,560 to the service.

The biggest challenge for VCAEC would be to improve its sustainability as securing grant funding became more challenging. This would enable them to plan more effectively in the medium to long term. They had been successful in securing consultant advice from "The Big Assist" and the priority continued to be ensuring that voluntary groups and volunteers were supported within the community and that, in turn, communities were helped to become more resilient.

The Partnerships Officer concluded by highlighting the comments in the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3 to the report), and asking Members to note the impact of not approving the annual grant contributions for the 2015/16 Service Level Agreements, as detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

Councillor Kerby asked if Forest Heath District Council contributed the same amount to Newmarket CAB as East Cambridgeshire District Council. The Partnerships Officer replied that she did not have the information to hand, but she would find out and email it to Members.

Referring to Appendices A and B of the report, Councillor Morrison asked if it would be possible to use one format for both of them so that cross referencing would be easier. The Partnerships Officer said that she had already asked about this and was told it would be possible to do this in the future.

The Chairman commented that he had visited both the Newmarket and Rural Cambs CAB's, and he considered that they were spending this Council's money very wisely and diligently. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

- i. To note the latest performance information relating to VCAEC and the Citizens Advice Bureaux;
- ii. To note the emerging issues identified by the Citizens Advice Bureaux;
- iii. To approve the annual grant contributions for the 2015/16 Service Level Agreements, as set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

*Councillor Williams left the meeting at 7.22pm.*



62. **COMMUNITY FUND GRANT APPLICATION: BOTTISHAM EARLY MORNING SWIMMING CLUB**

The Committee received a report, reference P169, previously circulated, regarding an application for grant aid from the Bottisham Early Morning Swimming Club.

The Principle Community & Leisure Services Officer reminded Members that this Council already provided grant funding of £2,723 per annum to the Bottisham Leisure Trust. It did not however provide grant funding to any individual sports clubs.

There were concerns that awarding grant aid would set a precedent as there might be other clubs which would be set up by the community in Bottisham, and this could be the first of a number of applications to be received.

Members concurred that for these reasons, it should not be awarded grant funding. Therefore,

It was resolved:

That the Bottisham Early Morning Swimming Club should *not* be awarded grant funding.

63. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Chairman welcomed Tony Langley, Accountancy Assistant, to his first meeting of the Commercial Services Committee.

The Committee considered a report, reference P170, previously circulated, which sought to update Members on the Committee's financial position for 2014/15, based on current projections for both revenue and capital expenditure.

In summarising the main points of his report, Tony Langley, Accountancy Assistant, drew Members' attention to paragraph 3.4 which set out the variances for the revenue budget. It was noted that the Committee's capital projects had been reviewed and no further variances had been identified.

It was resolved:

- i. To note that this Committee has a projected underspend of £131,737 compared to its approved revenue budget of £2,185,297; and
- ii. To note that this Committee has a projected capital budget of £297,000, as previously reported.

64. **S106 GRANT UPDATE**

The Committee received a report, P171, previously circulated, the appendix to which set out the S106 grants awarded between 8<sup>th</sup> July and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Members were reminded of the background to the revised process. It was noted that removing the £5k limit on officer delegation had reduced bureaucracy and quickened the decision making process, as a Committee decision was no longer required before an offer letter was issued.

Refocusing the application form and assessment criteria had ensured that the S106 application process was robust and resources were allocated fairly and appropriately.

It was resolved;

To note the S106 grants awarded between 8<sup>th</sup> July and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

65. **COMMUNITY FUND GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, reference P172, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note the grant offered to the Diamond 44 Community Group under Officer delegated powers.

It was resolved:

That the grant of £1,000 offered to the Diamond 44 Community Group, under Officer delegated powers, be noted.

66. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

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

It was resolved;

That the Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

67. **ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY: ANGEL DROVE COMMUTER CAR PARK, ELY.**

The Committee received a report, reference P173, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note the action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency, in connection with the Angel Drove Commuter Car Park, Ely.

Councillor Hunt asked the Committee to bear in mind that the other car parks and the on-street parking places in Ely were mostly all full on weekdays, and so this demountable decked structure was much needed.

It was resolved:

That the action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency, be noted.

68. **ASSET DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE – MINUTES**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Further to Minute No 32 (Chairman's Announcements), Councillor Hunt stated that the cost of the work in respect of the signage for free parking in Ely was under £5,000.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014 be received and noted.

69. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no 20 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 there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category 3 Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

70. **ASSET DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE – EXEMPT MINUTES**

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

It was resolved:

That the exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Asset Development Sub-Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014 be received and noted.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm.