

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee  
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on  
Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 5.30pm

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

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Chairman)  
Councillor Allen Alderson  
Councillor Steve Cheetham  
Councillor Lavinia Edwards  
Councillor Lis Every  
Councillor Coralie Green  
Councillor Mark Hugo  
Councillor Stuart Smith

### **OFFICERS**

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager  
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager  
Andy Dicks – Reprographics Manager  
Tracey Harding – Tourism & Town Centres Manager  
John Hill – Chief Executive  
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer  
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Mike Bradley

#### **41. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

#### **42. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Pearson and Lorna Dupré.

There were no substitutions.

#### **43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Every declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9 (Community Fund Grant Scheme), being the Vice Chairman of the Isle of Ely Arts Festival.

#### 44. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

#### 45. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- At the previous meeting the Committee had resolved to award grant funding to the Ely & Soham Association for Community Transport (ESACT), subject to the satisfactory resolution of an ongoing investigation. As the investigation had yet to be concluded, the funding had been ring fenced and it was hoped that an outcome could be reported to Members by the next Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017.
- Oliver Cromwell's House had once again been awarded the Visit England 'Hidden Gem' accolade. This was following a recent assessment under Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme. This accolade was testament to the 'high standards' achieved, which the assessor felt 'were truly deserving of recognition'. The assessor felt that once again significant improvements had been made and was impressed with the Escape Rooms experiences, new merchandise in the Gift Shop, dedicated website and the creative approach to social media.
- The Community Hub will represent a 'One Stop Shop' approach for supporting vulnerable people. The concept was originated by Sarah Burton in Housing Services based on a visit to a pilot project in Bury St Edmunds. It will be based from the Lighthouse Community centre on Lynn Road in Ely. The multi agency Hub involves drug and alcohol support, counselling, mental health support, domestic abuse advice and support, financial advice, homelessness prevention, advice and support on neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour and much more.

Key supporting agencies include Citizens Advice, ECDC Housing, Lighthouse Church, Red to Green mental health charity, Police, Fire & Rescue, and Cambridge Housing Services (CHS). The project has attracted grant funding from the Police & Crime Commissioner via the Community Safety Partnership following a grant support interview process lead by the Neighbourhood Support Officer.

By working closely together in one 'hub' setting, the agencies will eventually realise net savings and provide a more focussed and early intervention to help vulnerable clients. This aim is to prevent multiple visits to multiple agencies by repeat clients, thus realising savings and more focussed services.

At the launch event on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017, 15 clients with pressing needs were seen by agency representatives.

- The next meeting of the Commercial Services Committee will take place on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The Communities & Partnerships Manager is arranging a visit to the Ely Country Park prior to the Committee meeting so that Members can see for themselves the work that has been carried out and what is intended for the future.

46. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

The Committee received a report, R219, previously circulated, which provided Members with the end of year performance reports for 2016/17 and the new service delivery plans for 2017/18 for the following services:

- Tourism & Town Centres;
- Open Spaces & Facilities;
- Reprographics;
- Leisure Services; and
- Communities & Partnerships.

The Performance Management Officer introduced her report by asking Members to note an error in Appendix 2: it was a 12 month update report and not 6 months as stated in the title.

The Leisure Services and Communities & Partnerships Services end of year reports were for a timescale of 6 rather than 12 months, due to the previous restructure and later adoption of their service delivery plans.

Tourism & Town Centres Services would only be delivering their end of year report due to the current service review being carried out.

It was noted that recent changes to the performance management cycle had enabled the Council to review the process, and from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 onwards the monitoring timescales would align with the business planning cycle. There would also be one template for all reports in the future, resulting in a lot less paperwork.

The Performance Management Officer drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 4.3 of her report, which highlighted a number of end of year report outcomes:

- Open Spaces & Facilities – The service continued to retain the Green Flag accreditation for the Country Park and Jubilee Gardens. Whilst it had not met its financial target through the provision of playground safety checks, it had secured 9 external contracts and continued to look for potential growth opportunities;
- Leisure Services – The District Leisure Centre was on track and an operator had been procured, pending the final contract being agreed;

- Town Centres & Tourism – over 100 additional parking spaces would be opened at Angel Drove Commuter Car Park during late summer. £4,000 of income had been successfully secured from additional events at Oliver Cromwell's House. These included income from the popular 'Escape Room' events;
- Communities & Partnerships – The Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2017/19 had now been formally agreed by Council; and
- Reprographics – The service had secured £8,000 worth of external reprographics work which was undertaken between their ongoing commitments to the Council's requirements.

Speaking of her end of year update report, the Tourism & Town Centres Manager said her service had experienced a very good year, with new and different activities being offered at Oliver Cromwell's House. A new commercial website for Visit Ely was launched in September 2016 and had received many hits; advertisers were being sought as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. There was also much activity on Facebook and Twitter. The applications for the Angel Drove and Littleport Station car parks had received planning consent, with the former due to open in late summer.

With regard to tours and events, it was noted that the first Lord Protector's Fayre was successful with 250 people attending, and the response to the Escape Rooms events was very positive.

The town centres element of the service had reached a natural plateau with the resources that were available, but there had been a very successful launch to the 'New Business Saturday' event. The Adams Market in Littleport continued to be well supported, and with the 'Love Soham' shop campaign, it was anticipated that the town would see a brighter future.

Councillor Every said that whilst she liked the new format of the report, it did not show the enormity of all the work that had been done or the added value that tourism brings to Ely and the surrounding villages. She wished to reiterate just how important it was and congratulated the team on their efforts.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager commenced by thanking the Communities & Partnerships Manager and his team and the Friends of Jubilee Gardens for all their assistance in helping to retain the Green Flag accreditation. He continued, saying that 9 external contracts had been secured, including one for the Netherhall School and the service would continue to research the potential commercial opportunities within the District.

Going forward, it was hoped to incorporate sustainable drainage maintenance (SUDs) into the open spaces service once team members had received the appropriate training. There was also an ongoing commitment to ensure that Green Flag standards were used across all parks and open spaces.

Referring to the £10,000 worth of external contracts, Councillor Hugo asked how much had been done for Haddenham. The Open Spaces &

Facilities Manager replied that he was unable to give a figure at this point, but he would check and provide Members with the details.

The Chairman said he was concerned that there should be enough staff to cover all the work, and he asked whether it was difficult recruiting suitable people. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said it was difficult finding trained staff, and there was an additional problem in that new licence holders were not automatically licensed to tow trailers; they would therefore have to undergo training.

Councillor Every asked if the Open Spaces team did the external work as part of the East Cambs Trading Company. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager replied the staff were not part of the Company but their work was invoiced through ECTC. The Chief Executive added that the Company was used to invoice customers so that work could be taken on outside the geographical boundary of the District. He would provide Members with an explanation of how the payment mechanism worked.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman offered his thanks to the Open Spaces & Facilities team, saying that their work (in conjunction with willing volunteers) was a shining example of partnership working.

The Reprographics Manager introduced his report by stating that 2016/17 had been an extremely busy year. The document management system had been upgraded and initially things had not gone smoothly, which, in turn, had had a major impact on the Planning department. However, all the problems had now been resolved and the system was running smoothly. Reprographics was now assisting with the digitisation of planning documents which would help to reduce the level of internal paperwork.

Members noted that there had been 76,687 items of mail throughout the year and a saving of £2,000 had been made.

The printing side of the service was busy but had dropped a little; the new Cannon printer had gone down well with the Trading Company and all the departments that used printing services for their advertising work. The Reprographics Manager reiterated that the service had a good relationship with the Trading Company and Markets, with 150 jobs having been completed for the former.

On the commercial side of things, income from external work had doubled to £8,000 and he would continue to look for new opportunities.

Looking forward to 2017/18, Reprographics would continue to work with the Trading Company, and was presently involved with the design for the Mayoral Elections booklet.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mike Bradley, Member Service Delivery Champion for Reprographics, addressed the Committee. He said the Reprographics Manager and his team always took everything in their stride and delivered what was asked of them, and for this reason he had every confidence in them. He believed the department needed to invest in

itself and should push to get new equipment such as folding and binding machines, which would save the Authority money.

Councillor Cheetham asked how the commercial pricing rate for the Trading Company had been worked out and the Chief Executive responded, saying that he had calculated the rate. There was a budget and the pricing should generate enough income to be able to reinvest.

The Chairman remarked that he thought the service did a fantastic job, given the small number of people in the team; he concurred with Councillor Bradley's comment about investment and urged the Reprographics Manager to 'keep shouting'.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer was next to present his end of year report, and he reminded Members that much of what was before them had already come to Committee in the last 12 months. He was pleased to be able to report that all key areas were on track.

The new District Leisure Centre was going well and work was continuing with the other leisure centres. Work was already in progress with the Littleport, Burwell and Ellesmere Centres and it was likely that the Ross Peers Centre in Soham would come forward in due course.

Work would continue with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL). Much was going on in the background, including the implementation of a Public Health funded Physical Activity programme, the benefits of which would come to fruition in the coming year.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Leisure Services Officer for his presentation, saying that the Committee had received regular reports, but they did not diminish the amount of work he carried out. Similarly his links to Sport England did not represent large amounts of money, but a huge amount of expertise for which they were thankful.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager took Members through his end of year report, saying that targets had been met. These included two successful East Cambs Parish Conferences; the improvement plans for the Ely Country Park and the Riverside had been completed and approved, and the mooring management scheme enforced.

In connection with Assets of Community Value nominations, all had been processed in accordance with the statutory obligations under the Localism Act and 100% of timescales were met.

With regard to staffing, it was noted that a Communities & Partnerships Support Officer had been appointed to assist in the completion of the Service's projects.

Going forward into 2017/18, Members' attention was directed to the Service Delivery Plan which set out the targets and reporting timescales, and the Officers involved in the delivery of the outcomes. This included the circulation to all Service Leads of a first draft of a Vulnerable Communities

Strategy for East Cambridgeshire, and the Council's Community Engagement Strategy, by March 2018.

The Chairman said he was aware of how much work was involved, and the recruitment of the Support Officer had allowed so much more to be achieved. He had attended the Parish Conferences and had found them to be excellent. He duly thanked the Communities & Partnerships Manager for all his efforts and asked that the Committee's thanks also be extended to the Support Officer.

There being no further comments and questions,

It was resolved unanimously:

That the end of year performance reports and the new service delivery plans for 2017/18 for the following services be agreed:

- Tourism & Town Centres;
- Open Spaces & Facilities;
- Reprographics;
- Leisure Services; and
- Communities & Partnerships.

47. **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING (LEISURE CENTRES AND SPORT FACILITIES) 2016/17 – UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report, R220, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to agree the provision of funding to the Ellesmere Centre and Burwell Sports Centre.

Members were reminded that at the Committee's last meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017, a small amount of funding (£1,961) remained available following the completion of the main awards. The Centres were invited to submit bids for small projects, and requests for support to buy equipment had been received from the Ellesmere Centre and the Burwell Sports Centre.

Burwell had requested funding towards the purchase of four new sets of wheeled badminton posts, as the current ones were old and were undermining the development of badminton usage at the Centre. The cost would be £1,080 including VAT; the Centre was severely limited in its VAT recovery on costs because of partial exemption rules.

The request from the Ellesmere Centre was for a cricket mat trolley. The mats were kept in an adjacent store and brought out when required, but they were heavy and difficult for the juniors in particular to use. The Trustees were concerned that this might limit the use of the nets and potentially give rise to injuries. The proposed purchase of a two-mat trolley would cost £610 including VAT and delivery.

It was resolved:

- i. That the Burwell Sports Centre be awarded grant funding of £1080.00 including VAT; and
- ii. That the Ellesmere Centre be awarded grant funding of £610.00 including VAT.

#### **48. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

The Committee received a report, R221, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note the performance and emerging issues identified by three of the voluntary organisations funded by East Cambridgeshire District Council, and to agree their funding allocations for 2017/18.

The Chairman reminded Members that they had received presentations from the organisations over the course of this year, and he met with the Director of Rural Cambs Citizens Advice twice yearly.

At this point Councillor Every repeated her declaration of interest.

In presenting his report, the Communities & Partnerships Manager made the following points:

##### Rural Cambs Citizens Advice (Ely Office):

- There had been a total of 5,782 issues presented in the first 6 months of 2016/17;
- The top three issues were debt, benefit advice and employment advice;
- There had been £17,311.84 worth of housing benefit payment gains and £365,428.51 worth of debt negotiated for East Cambs residents;
- Rural Cambs Citizens Advice continued to employ a specialist debt advisor to support clients with unmanageable debt to help prevent homelessness or non payment of priority bills such as Council Tax;
- The advice service could be accessed in a numbers of ways via telephone, email and face to face. In the future there would also be Webchat and Skype;
- It was calculated that for every £1 spent on the Rural Cambs service, there was a fiscal benefit to clients of £26.02. This was income gained through benefits, debts written off and consumer problems resolved.

##### Citizens Advice Newmarket:

- There had been a total of 1,132 new issues in the first 6 months of 2016/17 that had arisen from 348 residents of East Cambridgeshire;
- 98 clients had received support with debt advice at specialist level, totalling £368,019.21;



- 88 clients were supported with disability related issue;
- A survey conducted by Citizens Advice Newmarket found that 87% of clients advised that they would have been unable to resolve their problems without the help of the service;
- It was calculated that for every £1 invested, £23.05 in benefits was recovered to individuals.

#### Voluntary & Community Action East Cambs (VCAEC):

- Training had been provided for 33 people from 12 member groups on issues including brand awareness, safeguarding adults and child protection;
- The total added value of volunteering hours in the VCAEC office was £19,080 up to the end of September 2016;
- The Social Car scheme remained in great demand, with 28 drivers volunteering a total of 3,058 hours, adding £43,215 to the service;
- Volunteers working on the Helping Hands gardening project between April and the end of September 2016 had given 2,290 hours of their time to complete 135 jobs for clients who would not otherwise have been able to get the work done;
- Both the Social Car scheme and Helping Hands supported the work of the East Cambs Health & Wellbeing Partnership and demand for their services was increasing.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager drew Members' attention to paragraphs 4.1 – 4.3 of his report which set out the emerging issues in respect of each organisation.

It was noted that the demand on Citizens Advice services had increased in recent years and was continuing to rise as the impact of welfare reform became evident. The financial contribution from the District Council was essential to their sustainability and ability to deliver the services that supported the most vulnerable.

The core funding provided to VCAEC was critical as the organisation no longer received funding from Cambridgeshire County Council or the Clinical Commissioning Group. It would use the withdrawal of this funding as an opportunity to prioritise its activities and align its objectives with those of the District Council.

Councillor Green said the CAB's were 'amazing' organisations and she supported their continued funding, because for some people, their services could be a lifeline. She was also pleased to see that the cost benefits could be calculated.

The Chairman concurred, adding that he was glad the Authority had prioritised in order to be able to continue to help.

There being no further comments,

It was resolved:

- i. To note the latest performance information relating to Voluntary & Community Action East Cambs and the Citizens Advice organisations;
- ii. To note the emerging issues identified by the voluntary organisations; and
- iii. To approve the annual grant contributions for the 2017/18 Service Level Agreements, as set out in paragraph 6.0 of the report.

#### **49. COMMUNITY FUND GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, reference R222, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note the grants offered under delegated powers from the Community Fund grant scheme.

It was resolved:

To note the following awards offered under Officer delegated powers:

- 1) £1,000 to the East Cambridgeshire Arts Festival Society;
- 2) £1,000 to Little Downham Village Hall

#### **50. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

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

It was resolved:

That the Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6:26pm.