

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on
Tuesday, 17th January 2017 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T

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

OFFICERS

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager
Sally Bonnett – Infrastructure & Strategy Manager
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer
Ian Smith – Principal Accountant

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

Granville Hawkes – Voluntary & Community Action East
Cambridgeshire

29. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

30. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lis Every.

There were no substitutions.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dupré asked whether she should declare an interest in Agenda Item No.8 (Community Transport Grant), as she had attended (as an affected Local Member) the meetings of the County Council's Total Transport Steering Group.

The Chairman said he did not think it was necessary but her query could be recorded in the minutes.

32. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

33. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- The order of the agenda was being changed to take Item No 11 (Budget Monitoring Report) as the first item of business.
- Members' attention was drawn to the tabled flyers regarding the launch of three new events which would be taking place at Oliver Cromwell's House: the Lord Protector's Historical Fayre, Pop Up Escape Room, and Paranormal Virtual Reality Fridays.
- The cinema site was growing rapidly and the start of the Leisure Centre would be within the next 2 – 3 weeks.

Councillor Smith asked what progress was being made with the underpass. The Chairman replied that there had been some delays due to procedure at the County Council, but work was now underway. The site would open once the underpass was ready to open.

34. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report, R177, previously circulated, which provided details of the financial position for services under the Commercial Services Committee.

The Principal Accountant advised the Committee that the revenue budget for each of the Committee's services had been reviewed and at this point in the year, four outturn variances had been identified. These were set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report and showed an under spend of £41,500.

With regard to spending on the capital projects, it was forecast that there would be a yearend under spend on the Local Authority Trading Company of £465,294. This was not an under spend in the true sense of the word, but rather a revised profile of when the Company was expected to drawdown the full £5,000,000 provided in the Council's budget as loan funding, over the medium term.

It was now anticipated that spending on the Ely Country Park would be £16,000, an under spend of £48,000 when compared to the budget available.

Expenditure on the Leisure Centre had been re-profiled and this had reduced the anticipated expenditure in 2016/17 by £2,432,411; the projected outturn

was now £2,844,088. As with the Company Loan, this was not a reduction in total cost of the project and the unused funding would need to be rolled forward into 2017/18 to complete the build.

Councillor Dupré said the report did not give a clear reason for the variance relating to the Country Park. In requesting an explanation, she suggested that it would be helpful if such information could be included in future reports. The Principal Accountant replied that the works had cost less than was originally forecast.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager added Members would be provided with a breakdown of the figures.

It was resolved:

- i. To note that this Committee has a projected under spend of £41,500 compared to its revenue budget of £1,417,919;
- ii. To note that this Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £5,476,383, this is a £2,945,705 under spend compared to its revised budget.

35. **PRESENTATION – VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ACTION EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE (VCAEC)**

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

Mr Hawkes commenced by stating that in the last year 20,000 volunteer hours and £280,000 of social value had been added back into the community in East Cambridgeshire. This had been achieved through funding from East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and it allowed VCAEC to undertake its core functions.

Funding was no longer received from the County Council or CCG. However, VCAEC had reserves which would cover the cost of a vehicle and the closure costs in the event that the organisation ceased operating. Half of the funding lost had been saved by not replacing a member of staff who had left the organisation. Although VCAEC had taken a hit, he was determined it would not sink.

It was noted that most of the value came from the volunteer hours. Mr Hawkes wanted his organisation to become more important within the District and to develop more projects. He said he had submitted an 'expression of interest' to the County Innovation Fund as he wished to set up a project to help young people into work. This would include help with writing CVs and preparing for job interviews. There was a demonstrable need for those in the 18 – 20 age group, especially as there was no longer a Careers Advice Service.

The Ely Volunteer Centre administered the 'Do It' website and posted volunteering opportunities; approximately 60 people were placed each year. It also ran two main projects: the East Cambs Social Car Scheme, and the Helping Hands Gardening Project.

The Car Scheme had 30 drivers throughout the District who, between them, covered 100,000 miles per annum and offered an invaluable service to those who were unable to use public transport or drive themselves. The demand for the service was growing and an online booking system had been introduced in the last year.

The Helping Hands project cost £35,000 per annum to run and demand for its services continued to increase, with referrals being received from a wide variety of sources.

Mr Hawkes said that VCAEC was the eyes and ears of the community, and he spoke of two instances where assistance had been given to individuals. Such help, he said, was not measured as a value and did not appear in any figures.

He concluded by saying he was determined that he would produce the same figures again next year, and he thanked the District Council for its support.

Councillor Schumann thought VCAEC was incredible for what it did and he believed it offered extraordinary value to the community. Having been on the VCAEC Board himself some years ago, he said he knew what it was like for Mr Hawkes, and said the points he was about to raise were intended to be helpful:

- Did VCAEC still receive several pence per mile per Social Car Scheme trip ?
- Whilst admiring what was being done, he thought it was very 'Granville – centric' because of having lost a member of staff. He worried what would happen to VCAEC if something happened to Mr Hawkes and said he would like reassurance about what the Board was doing;
- Money was not everything and he wondered if there was any other form of support that ECDC could offer;
- Had anything happened regarding the Support Cambridgeshire Partnership engaging with VCAEC ?
- The purpose of the gardening scheme was to make money and if it had not already been done, Sanctuary Housing and the parishes should be approached and encouraged to commission Helping Hands to carry out work for them;
- Were there any further mergers and/or efficiencies to be made in and around East Cambridgeshire?

Mr Hawkes replied that the subsidy from the Social Car Scheme was still being received and although Sanctuary Housing provided some funding, he was also looking for voluntary contributions. The Trustees shared Councillor Schumann's concerns about what would happen to VCAEC in the event that something happened to him, and therefore a volunteer had been recruited to take up some of the responsibilities.

In terms of funding, if there was not an increase in income then he himself was the biggest overhead. One option would be for him to reduce his hours, or another would be to reduce his hours and re-employ a deputy.

Councillor Schumann asked if there was any strategic help that the Council could offer, and suggested that Mr Hawkes might like to give it some thought before responding.

Taking up on Councillor Schumann's query about Supporting Cambridgeshire, Mr Hawkes said he had heard nothing from them since he last came to Committee in April 2016. However, he would love an opportunity to spend some time with whoever was the appropriate Officer in the Council to discuss how to be more efficient. He recalled there being a business strategy two years ago, but he was never consulted on it.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hawkes for his attendance and wished him well for the future. He said he thought Councillor Schumann had put forward some excellent ideas and asked Mr Hawkes to think about how the Council might help and then discuss it with the Communities & Partnerships Manager.

36. **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, R173, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to give consideration to awarding the £15,000 Community Transport Grant to local community transport providers.

Sally Bonnett, Infrastructure & Strategy Manager, stated that in order to make organisations aware of the grant scheme, local community transport providers were contacted directly and provided with information about the grant. The scheme was also promoted via the local press and the ECDC website.

Four application forms were received and appraised, and points were awarded for the scope of the services provided, additionality that would be delivered as a result of funding and plans to ensure the sustainability of the service moving forward. An element of match funding was a qualifying condition for receiving the grant to ensure maximum impact from the £15,000.

The applications from Ely & Soham Association of Community Transport (ESACT), to support the expansion of dial-a-ride in Cambridgeshire, and from VCAEC to computerise the East Cambridgeshire Social Car Scheme booking system to enable an increase in activity levels, had both scored the highest marks. It was therefore recommended that the funding be split between the two projects.

Councillor Dupré noted that an investigation involving ESACT had not yet been completely resolved, and she asked if, in the light of this, Members were comfortable granting the organisation money at this time. She was concerned about what would happen should there be a negative outcome to the investigation. She also asked what the organisation was intending to do with the grant funding. The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager replied that ESACT wished to expand its services in East Cambridgeshire; the grant spend would be monitored very carefully.

Councillor Dupré proposed, and the Committee agreed that ESACT should be awarded the grant funding, subject to a satisfactory resolution to the investigation, and that a further report reviewing the situation be brought back to March's meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Green asked if there would be any implications for service delivery and the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager said she would clarify this at her meeting on 23rd January. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

- 1) That £13,500 be awarded to Ely & Soham Association of Community Transport (ESACT), subject to a satisfactory resolution to the ongoing investigation; and
- 2) That £1,500 be awarded to the East Cambridgeshire Social Car Scheme.

37. **DRAFT ELY COUNTRY PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-20**

The Committee received a report, R174, previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on progress made with delivering the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17, and which sought Member approval of the 2017-20 Improvement Plan.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager introduced his report by drawing Members' attention to paragraph 3.3 which set out some of the key improvement works and achievements that had taken place during 2015-17:

- In August 2016, the Country Park successfully obtained its Green Flag status for the third time. It continued to be one of just seven Natural England accredited country parks in the East of England;
- Toilet provision during the summer months in 2015 and 2016;
- Access improvement works at Springhead Lane gateway and slope;
- New seating was provided in the Park;
- Regular site inspections were carried out by the Communities & Partnerships department, and consultation with users to gain valuable feedback.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the Improvement Plan for 2017-20, showing the following priority areas: junior/youth play provision; portable seasonal toilets; seating, shade provision, baby/toddler provision; external funding, and further improvement opportunities. It also detailed the estimated budget required and the work required before implementation.

Members noted that as the Country Park's popularity as a visitor destination increased it was essential that the site continued to meet visitor needs. Further

consultation would be carried out with users and stakeholders to identify further improvements and external funding opportunities would be explored.

In terms of financial implications, the estimated costs of £100,000 could be met from S106 monies to deliver the Improvement Plan for 2017-20. It was appreciated that the costs could increase depending on any changes to work specifications and so it was proposed that the Director, Commercial, be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Chairman of the Commercial Services Committee, to agree additional funding up to a maximum of 20%.

Councillor Dupré noted that play provision seemed to be centred around babies and younger children and she asked if any consideration had been given to adults. The Communities & Partnerships Manager said that this had been considered; a 'Trim Trail' had been installed and it appeared to be well used. However, the aim was to achieve a mix for all ages.

Councillor Pearson thought the Country Park to be a fantastic facility; he had seen adults using the Trim Trail and speed walking around the Park and children playing down there over the winter. He was also very pleased to see that there were plenty of dog bins in the Park.

The Chairman agreed that the Country Park was a very well used facility and he asked the Communities & Partnerships Manager to arrange a visit to the Park and Riverside before the next meeting of Committee, as he believed it would be of benefit to Members.

It was resolved:

- i. To note the progress update made with the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17;
- ii. To approve the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2017-20, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- iii. To delegate authority to the Director, Commercial, in consultation with the Chairman of Commercial Services Committee, in accordance with paragraph 5.2 of this report.

38. DRAFT ELY RIVERSIDE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2017-19

The Committee considered a report, R175, previously circulated, which sought Member approval of the Ely Riverside Improvement Plan 2017-19.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager reminded Members that the Council had launched a new mooring management scheme in September 2015 to encourage more boaters to visit Ely and ensure that moorings were available when boaters arrived.

During 2015-16, a number of improvement works were carried out at the riverside to enable maximum usage of the Council managed moorings and to enhance visitors' experience. These included:

- Installation of new fendering along Willow Walk;

- Landscaping of the Slipway;
- Fendering installation and dredging works at Annesdale; and
- Installation of mooring signage.

A stakeholder meeting was held in March 2016 to gather feedback on the first six months of the new enforcement scheme, and a number of priority areas for potential were identified. It was agreed that a consultation would be conducted during the summer of 2016 to elicit feedback from river users, stakeholders and the local community on the priority areas.

The Draft Ely Riverside Improvement Plan 2017-19 was developed from the feedback and proposed three priority areas for improvement: fishing signage, fender installation, and improved visitor signage.

With regard to commercial mooring, the Council had invited expressions of interest for a vacant commercial mooring berth in 2015 but no interest was expressed and therefore the berth was incorporated into visitor mooring space in advance of the launch of the new mooring enforcement scheme. Having subsequently reviewed the level of interest since the introduction of the enforcement scheme, and taking into account the reduction in visitor mooring provision in Ely, any additional commercial mooring space would result in less mooring provision for visitors.

As the Council wished to encourage visitors to Ely by boat and provide sufficient provision to enable a regular flow of vessels to the city and the surrounding area, it was not recommended that commercial mooring opportunities be pursued. Officers would review this position annually.

The Open Spaces team had identified that the existing timber fendering between Annesdale and Jubilee Gardens was no longer fit for purpose and should therefore be replaced. However, a natural looking recycled plastic product would be much more sustainable and would last indefinitely.

Much of the existing visitor signage at the riverside was no longer fit for purpose, being out of date and looking shabby. It also did not include information about the Ely Country Park and so it was proposed that a multi agency approach be taken to reviewing the existing signage and identifying improvements.

Speaking of fishing signage, the Communities & Partnerships Manager reiterated that it was the Council's aspiration that everyone should enjoy the riverside. At present, neither boaters nor anglers received preferential treatment and the Council had been advised on various occasions over the past three years that it was not clear which party, if any, had the right of use. As a result, there had been a number of incidents of anti social behaviour requiring the involvement of the Police. Consultation had identified that signage would help to clarify that no party had preferential right of use and that consideration should be encouraged amongst all river users.

Councillor Pearson said he had seen an increase in the number of boat clubs using Ely. He fully supported the improvement of the signage, but wondered

whether consideration should be given to changing the length of the winter mooring hours, so as to increase footfall and income. The Communities & Partnerships Manager replied that the new signage would be worded very carefully. When the Council's former Partnerships Officer was dealing with the riverside only a small number of boaters had wanted winter mooring and the majority had indicated that they wanted the 48 hours limit all year round. However, the Council was continually consulting and could review the situation should the demand rise.

The Chairman reminded Members that the mooring enforcement regime was still in its infancy and should be allowed to complete its first 12 month period before any changes were considered. Councillor Pearson responded, saying the Council should be going to the Boating Association and clubs; the people who lived on boats should be looked after so that they could get closer to the services and facilities in Ely.

Councillor Schumann thought the riverside to be an eclectic, eccentric place and whilst he supported the improvement of the signage, he thought it would be a shame to put up more signs without being more community minded and imaginative. To this purpose, he suggested that an artist could be commissioned to come up with a series of signs. The Director, Commercial cautioned the need to balance the cost against the monies available and the Council's priorities. The cost options could be explored and the findings brought back to the Committee.

It was resolved:

- 1) To approve the Ely Riverside Improvement Plan 2017-19, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- 2) To delegate authority to the Director, Commercial, in consultation with the Chairman of Commercial Services Committee, in accordance with paragraph 5.2 of this report.

39. **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING (LEISURE CENTRES & SPORTS FACILITIES) 2016-17 – UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report, R176, previously circulated, which provided Members with a further on the status of project awarded funding for the 2016-17 financial year.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer reminded Members that the award to Littleport Leisure Centre was intended to support the development of the GP Referral Service. The proposal from the Centre was built around increasing the staff allocation, but limitations to the availability of a key part time member of staff had held back this. Some progress had been made by allocating virtually all of the available staff time to this area, albeit at a notional cost to the mainstream business.

Separately from GP referrals, the Centre also supported two other community health programmes: a Posability stroke support activity group, and a clinically

referred weight management group. Both programmes received pricing concessions to reflect their value to the community and the investment of the respective partner agencies. However, the presence of these groups had highlighted the need for an evacuation chair for use in the upstairs areas of the Centre, and also a defibrillator.

In the light of these points, the Centre had duly requested that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) grant for this year be re-focused to support these wider community health programmes, generally on a 50:50 basis. The value of the award would remain unchanged and the breakdown was envisaged as follows:

Revenue support for Posability and Weight Management programmes (calculated as 50% of income foregone at normal rates)	£1,895
Support to GP Referral and related one-to-one client advice (calculated as 50% of direct cost, net of income)	£1,485
Purchase of Evac chair and defibrillator (contribution, based on estimated total cost of £2,400 incl user training and VAT)	£1,500
Total	£4,880

In response to a question from Councillor Dupré regarding the £864 in respect of Mepal Outdoor Centre, the Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that the money was currently unspent. He could look to see if some small projects could take up on it, but if unused it would go back into the pot at the end of the financial year.

There being no further comments,

It was resolved:

That the re-focusing of the grant to Littleport Leisure Centre, as set out in the report, be agreed.

40. **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 6:48pm.