

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee held in the Vernon Cross Room, Ely Museum, Ely on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 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 Lavinia Edwards  
Councillor Lis Every  
Councillor Coralie Green  
Councillor Mark Hugo

### **OFFICERS**

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager  
Nick Ball – Neighbourhood Support Officer  
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager  
Andy Dicks – Reprographics Manager  
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial  
Tracey Harding – Tourism & Town Centres Manager  
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

### **I N A T T E N D A N C E**

Councillor Mike Bradley  
Councillor Hamish Ross  
3 members of the public attended the meeting

#### **4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Two questions were received from members of the public.

The following question was asked by Ms Michelle Wolfe:

*In answer to my previous question of 12<sup>th</sup> April regarding the perceived advantages of moving the coach park from Barton Road I was advised that this would allow more car parking to be made available. How can this Committee justify this statement when their latest plans for a coach drop off point in Barton Road Car Park are inadequate and not acceptable to Highways Department, requiring the loss of at least 10 parking spaces to make it halfway workable, the loss of Poets House car park with no alternative arrangements means that 22 spaces will be needed in the public car park for them, disabled bays have been reduced or made unworkable requiring the loss of 3 further public spaces to reinstate the current allowance, and by this Council's admission 11 further public car parking spaces will be used for*

*visitors to the proposed housing development ? In summary, a net loss of at least 37 spaces NOT a gain of 9. And no mention of arrangements for Market traders, their stalls or storage for the street cleaner's barrow?*

The Director, Commercial, responded as follows:

*If planning permission is granted for change of use of the Council Depot at the Planning Committee meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July then the Poets House parking will be relocated to the Depot site. This change would allow the Council to reconfigure the western part of the main car park site to temporarily increase the public parking provision, during the busy Christmas period, from the current 192 public car parking spaces up to 234.*

*If planning permission is granted for the housing development application then it is expected that work would commence on that project in January 2017. If this is the case, then the eastern part of the car park would be re-configured into the final arrangement. This would provide 186 public car parking spaces and a single short stay coach drop off/pick up point at Barton Road. Space would also continue to be reserved for market traders on Thursdays and Saturdays.*

*Market Trader car parking will be reconfigured and there will be no loss of spaces to the traders. The market stalls will be relocated to Portley Hill Depot in Littleport.*

The following question was asked by Mrs Lesley Bishop:

*Proposals 3.8 and 3.9 of agenda item number 8 are based on an assumption of a suitable drop off coach parking space being available at Barton Road car park, and the proposed plans for alteration of and building on that car park have not been approved by the Planning Committee or Highways departments; they are based on an unknown premise and there are, as yet, no firm plans regarding the Leisure centre particularly with regard to coach parking.*

*In the light of this, does the meeting not agree that all matters pertaining to the Barton Road application, the Forum, and coach and related car parking including the potential loss of 22 car parking spaces for Poet's House, 39 for market traders and the loss of public parking spaces, if the Barton Road plans are passed, and all of the safety issues involved which will include coach drop off, parking, congestion, and loss of amenities, all matters should be consolidated and dealt with by the Planning Authority and is it proposed that coach companies should be charged for coach parking in Ely when this has always been available free of charge ?*

The Director, Commercial, responded as follows:

*The proposal to provide coach parking facilities at Lancaster Way, Ely will enable the Council to make an informed decision on the Barton Road development. The decision will be taken into consideration when the matter is brought before Planning Committee for final resolution.*

*All the matters pertaining to the planning application, as detailed in your question, will be for consideration by the Planning Committee.  
I can confirm that there is no intention to charge for coach parking at Lancaster Way, Ely.*

5. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Pearson, and Stuart Smith.

There were no substitutions.

6. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

7. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> April and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman said he did not have any specific announcements, but suggested that if Members took a trip to Downham Road, they would be able to see how quickly the site for the new cinema was progressing. Ely would have its second cinema early next year.

9. **END OF YEAR REPORTING & NEW SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS**

The Committee received a report, R21, previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on the end of year performance for 2015/16 and sought their approval for the Service Delivery Plans for 2016/17.

The Performance Management Officer reminded Members that performance management was critical to ensure that services met the needs and expectations of the Council's customers. The end of year reports indicated how the Authority had performed over the past twelve months, highlighting specific over and under performance. The new Service Delivery Plans focussed on priorities for the individual services over the coming year, both individually and collaboratively.

Councillor Dupré asked if it would be possible for future reports to have 'traffic light' (red, amber and green) annotation and arrows to indicate the direction of travel in relation to performance, as she felt this would make navigation much easier for Members. The Performance Management Officer said the report template had been simplified, but this could be considered.

The Director, Commercial, asked Members to note that there had been a number of changes due to the recent management restructures. Leisure was now a stand-alone service and Community Safety had been transferred over to the Housing Service. Lewis Bage was now the Community & Partnerships Manager and Victor Le Grand, the Senior Leisure Services Officer.

#### Leisure & Community Services

Victor Le Grand, Senior Leisure Services Officer, said he did not have much to add to the end of year report that was before Members, as a great deal of the content had already been discussed at the Committee meeting in January.

A special meeting of Council was being held on 28<sup>th</sup> June to agree the funding strategy for the leisure centre and to appoint an operator and contractor for the building works. All other works were on track and would gather pace over the coming year.

Councillor Every offered her congratulations and asked the Senior Leisure Services Officer to outline the importance held for the development of all the other leisure centres. He replied that they were all very important, as East Cambridgeshire was a large District. It was important that activities and facilities were available within walking distance in communities. This was something that had come through in the Needs Assessments and should therefore be protected, maintained and developed. The intention was to create linkages between health agencies and the leisure centres (weight management being one such example) so as to improve the health of residents and increase their physical activity. The centres were very much about leisure, sport and community, with the emphasis being on the latter. Councillor Every then asked that it be re-established that the new leisure centre would not detract from the work of the existing leisure facilities. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that it would be ensured that the new centre complemented the work being carried out in the local leisure facilities without prejudicing any of them.

With regard to the Council's application for Sport England's Strategic facilities funding, it was noted that engagement with the organisation was helping to inform the operator procurement and business planning for the centre. Submission of the application would follow the final financial appraisal and decision to be taken by Council on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

Nick Ball, Neighbourhood Support Officer, informed Members that all partner agencies had completed the ECINS (antisocial behaviour case management system) training and this was now being used for vulnerable people; it had been very well received and would be ongoing.

The new Antisocial Behaviour Powers had been effectively deployed in Soham, with the issue of a Public Spaces Protection Order, and a Community Protection Notice warning had been issued in Burwell. In the case of Soham, it was noted that the Police, the Village College and the Town Council were all very happy with the results.

All front line staff had received statutory training and awareness sessions in relation to the Government's Prevent (Counter Terrorism) Agenda. This was a very high profile, ongoing initiative, backed by the Home Office, and had been a big success to date.

Councillor Dupré asked about neighbourhood plans; she was informed that they would be a priority this year for the Communities & Partnerships Manager to develop a strategy to engage with the parishes so that the use of monies available could be maximised.

Lewis Bage, Communities & Partnerships Manager, stated that all works that formed the first half of the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17 were completed. This included a trial of seasonal portable toilets, access improvements to the gateway and surface improvement works at Springhead Lane.

The Council had applied for, and been awarded a second Green Flag quality status for Ely Country Park. Not only did this recognise the Council's commitment to one of the best open spaces in the UK, but it also paid tribute to the hard work of the Open Spaces Team.

The Committee noted that all the mooring enforcement procedures, processes and works in connection with the Council's new mooring management scheme on Ely riverside were completed, and the new enforcement scheme was successfully launched on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Councillor Green asked for more information regarding the seasonal portable toilets. The Communities & Partnerships Manager explained that, based on feedback from the consultees, the trial had been very successful so far. Various options had been considered and the decision taken to go with standard portable toilets. A cleaner had been appointed and a company engaged to provide and service the conveniences. This had been subject to a two year trial period, the results of which would be brought to Committee in November 2016. The Chairman commented that it was important that Members should have the opportunity to review the situation, given the importance of the Country Park. On behalf of the Committee, he congratulated Officers on their achievements, saying they were much appreciated.

### Town Centres & Tourism

Tracey Harding, Tourism & Town Centres Manager, introduced her report by informing Members that, despite much work by the Strategic Land Adviser, the projects to extend the commuter car parking at Angel Drove, Ely and Littleport Station had been subject to delays in land acquisition and the results would therefore be carried forward to the next Service Plan.

A feasibility study to create a new commercial website for 'Visit Ely', which formed part of the Council's Transformation Programme, had been achieved and the launch would take place in July.

However, by far the greatest achievement was the production of cost effective events which were professional and safely run. Much hard work had gone into scrutinising all expenditure and increasing revenue to ensure a

profit was made from events. Advertising costs had been reviewed, and with the use of social media, they had been reduced.

Turning next to the Service Delivery Plan for 2016/17, the Tourism & Town Centres Manager stated that the Service budgets were broken down into car parking, Oliver Cromwell's House and Tourism (events and marketing).

With regard to car parking in 2014/15, it was noted that had the one-off income received from the Post Office for their use of the Newnham Street Car not been included, the figures for 2015/16 would have shown a profit. The gross cost of the service increased in 2015/16 due to the cost of white lining of all the car parks.

There had been a slight overall reduction in income at Oliver Cromwell's House despite admissions having increased during 2015/16. The overall reduction in expenditure reduced the net cost of the budget.

The income for tourism (events and marketing) increased and there was a reduction in paid advertising.

On the whole, the Service was improving year on year. It was hoped that with the launch of the new commercial website, there would be an increase in income of at least £5,000 in the first 12 months, and there would be a drive to increase the programme of events and tours available at Oliver Cromwell's House.

It was intended to establish a newly constituted group for Ely's Town Team to be a recognised voice and lead in driving the future city centre's growth and development. The feasibility of receiving Heritage Lottery funding in order to continue to develop the work of the Littleport Town Team Action Plan would be investigated and a new Town Team for Soham was to be established to develop and carry out a one year Action Plan

Councillor Hamish Ross addressed the Committee in his capacity as the Member Service Delivery Champion for Tourism & Town Centres. He said he wholeheartedly supported and endorsed everything in the end of year report and Service Delivery Plan. The events that had taken place were outstanding, and he was very excited by what he had seen. Soham Town Council was greatly excited by the prospect of the Action Plan, with its focus on the High Street.

The Car Parking Team had excelled themselves, given their decreasing numbers, and made a saving of £36,000; Oliver Cromwell's House had saved £56,000, and Tourism had saved £21,500. This was a total of almost £114,000 accrued back to the Council.

During the course of discussion, Councillor Dupré raised a query regarding the Strategic Land Advisor and a potential conflict of interest in relation to his position within the Council's Trading Company. The Director, Commercial, explained that he was the Head of Development for the Company, but acting as a consultant for car parking, and the Council was buying back his time from the Company. Councillor Dupré said she was still concerned about a conflict of interest and asked for assurance that the

Strategic Land Manager had no Council responsibility; the Director said she would seek advice on this matter.

### Open Spaces & Facilities

Spencer Clark, Open Spaces & Facilities Manager commenced by speaking of some of the successes achieved by his Service. A new 3 year + 2 year ground maintenance contract with Sanctuary Housing had been agreed; Ely Country Park and Jubilee Gardens had retained their Green Flag status for a second year; the playground inspection service for town and parish councils had seen a 42% increase in income due to new contracts and one-off jobs, and commercial maintenance work was ongoing.

In connection with ECDC assets, the Committee noted that 83% of planned maintenance work had been completed and all assets were compliant with the required legal standards. Potential software packages were being reviewed to enable effective management of the Council's assets. The Health & Safety Working Group, comprising Officers from all departments, the Director, Commercial, and an elected Member, met on a quarterly basis.

Looking to the future, the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said that his Service would be seeking to maximise the Council's income by offering services to other partners and agencies as part of the Authority's commercialism agenda. Training requirements would be identified so that staff would be able to carry out all operational works effectively and efficiently, and health & safety policies would be reviewed to ensure compliance with legislation. With the discovery of Bee Orchids in Ely, a project was being developed to ensure the preservation of this protected species.

### Reprographics

Andy Dicks, Reprographics Manager said there had been a review of the service being delivered by the DMS Team to ensure that the system was being used effectively between services and that ICT facilities were being used to best effect. The review with Planning Services resulted in a more efficient way to index and redact documents, thereby avoiding duplication by both teams. In terms of volume, the past year had seen 122,000 documents and 13,500 cheques pass through the system. However, it was highlighted that by moving to Mailmark franking of envelopes, a saving of £2,000 had been achieved.

Speaking next of the Graphic Design, Printing and Stationery service, the Reprographics Manager stated that the target of 100% for the printing of agendas within the statutory 5 working days had been achieved, with a great deal of the work being in colour. Similarly, the target for the creation of artwork from conception to completion had been achieved, with 850 jobs having been handled by the service.

The Reprographics Manager concluded by reminding Members that they were always very welcome to come and visit the section to see what went on there, and he would be happy to answer any queries they might have.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mike Bradley addressed the Committee and said it was a pleasure to be the Member Service Delivery Champion for Reprographics. There was a continued focus on providing an excellent service, and the team was very efficient. Having a new printer had made a big difference to the Service, and it was hoped to maybe have new scanners in the future but he felt the Reprographics Manager should have control of this.

The Chairman thanked the Reprographics Manager for his attendance, saying he believed that this was a team that just got on with things without any fuss. Having listened to the figures, he was staggered to learn of the volume of work, especially cheques, that passed through the section. He concluded by saying that Members appreciated all that the Service did for the Council.

It was resolved:

- i. To note the End of Year Performance Reports (2015/16);
- ii. To approve the Service Delivery Plans (2016/17) for:
  - Tourism & Town Centres
  - Open Spaces & Facilities
  - Reprographics

#### 10. **BURWELL PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Committee received a report, R22, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to approve the closure of public conveniences located at The Causeway, Burwell.

Emma Grima, Director, Commercial, reminded Members that the draft improvement plan (Appendix 1 to the report), had been discussed at Asset Development Committee in February 2016 and a recommendation made in relation to the future of the public conveniences:

*Continue with the service for a period of one year with a contribution of £4,500 per annum from Burwell Parish Council and explore the possible opportunities to transfer the service to Burwell Parish Council in 2017/18.*

*In the event that an agreement cannot be reached between the Council and Burwell Parish Council, close the facilities and make a compensation payment to Burwell Parish Council equivalent of 1 years running cost.*

Members noted that numerous discussions with members of Burwell Parish Council had taken place regarding the recommendation of the draft improvement plan, and to explore the possibility of transferring the service to Burwell Parish Council.

In March 2016, the Parish Council confirmed that they were not in a position to accept the recommendation, as detailed above, and wished to receive the compensation payment.



In the light of this, it was recommended that the public conveniences located at The Causeway, Burwell be closed as from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016, and that Burwell Parish Council should receive a compensation payment of £9,026.

Councillor Every asked if any progress had been made regarding a use for the disused building. The Director, Commercial, replied that there was no planned use as yet, but this would be reviewed. Whereupon,

It was resolved unanimously:

To approve the closure of public conveniences at The Causeway, Burwell and make a compensation payment to Burwell Parish Council equivalent to 1 year's running costs.

#### 11. **PROVISION OF COACH PARKING BAYS**

The Committee received a report, R23, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to consider alternative coach parking facilities in Ely.

Emma Grima, Director, Commercial, first asked Members to note a correction to paragraph 2.1(ii), in that it should read:

*'... to enter into a **licence** to secure coach parking at Lancaster Way, Ely.'*

She then reminded Members of the background to the issue, as set out in paragraphs 3.2 – 3.10 of her report.

It was noted that, in order to accommodate the relocation of coach parking from Barton Road, Ely, Officers had secured (subject to Committee approval) an alternative location at Lancaster Way, Ely. This would be a temporary measure until the end of 2017. After this period, it was proposed that coach parking be permanently relocated to Downham Road, Ely as part of the proposed new leisure development.

In order to secure the proposal for the temporary alternative location, the Council would be required to enter into a licence with the landowner. The licence would provide for up to five coach parking bays dedicated for exclusive use by the Council.

With regard to the proposals to amend the Off-Street Parking Order to incorporate the increased fee for the fixed penalty notice and cashless payment, this would be brought back before the Commercial Services Committee at a later date.

Councillor Dupré had a number of questions. She asked if it was proposed for coaches to drop off at Barton Road and then go on to park at Lancaster Way; the Chairman replied, saying that passengers would alight at The Gallery.

Councillor Dupré asked whether the impact of the increase in traffic movements around Ely had been calculated. She also questioned whether this had been considered if coaches were parking at the leisure centre and she sought clarification regarding the exact number of spaces to be provided

by the licence. The Director responded, saying that the licence would provide five spaces.

Councillor Dupré next asked about when the new parking arrangements would commence and if parking at the new leisure centre would be free of charge. The Director replied that implementation would be as soon as the licence had been signed and parking would be made available as soon as possible; car parking at the leisure development would be free of charge and available before the centre itself opened. No work had been conducted in respect of highway mapping, but the County Council would be informed.

It was resolved:

- i. To withdraw proposals to amend the Off-Street Parking Places Order 2016 (Number 1), as set out in 3.2 of the report;
- ii. To instruct the Director, Commercial, to enter into a licence to secure coach parking at Lancaster Way, Ely.

## 12. **COMMUNITY FUND GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, R24, 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 Ely Town Crier Committee;
- 2) £1,000 to the Aldreth Community Association;
- 3) £1,000 to Centre 33; and
- 4) £356.30 to the Little Downham Conservation Group.

## 13. **ANNUAL REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Committee considered a report, R25, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to receive the Annual Reports from appointed Council representatives on the activities and manner in which funding was spent by the outside bodies within the responsibility of the Commercial Services Committee.

Councillor Dupré enquired about the City of Ely Perspective, wishing to know what it was and who owned it. Councillor Every explained that the Perspective had been started about ten years ago with the intention of improving and developing Ely for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses alike. The organisation was now very small, but still had the ability to raise money and it comprised several directors, a City Councillor and a non-councillor Chairman. There being no further comments or questions,

It was resolved:

That the Annual Reports from appointed Council representatives on the activities and manner in which funding is spent by the outside bodies within the responsibility of the Commercial Services Committee, be noted.

14. **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 7:00pm.