

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 5.31pm

### **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 Mark Hugo  
Councillor James Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Coralie Green)  
Councillor Stuart Smith

### **OFFICERS**

Nick Ball – Neighbourhood Support Officer  
Sally Bonnett – Infrastructure & Strategy Manager  
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager  
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial & Corporate Services  
Tracey Harding – Tourism & Town Centres Manager  
Tony Langle – Accountancy Assistant  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer  
Andy Radford – Chief Financial Officer  
Hetty Thornton – Performance Officer

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

Councillor Mike Bradley  
Councillor Lisa Stubbs

#### **30. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

#### **31. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coralie Green, Andy Pearson and Dan Schumann.

It was noted that Councillor James Palmer would substitute for Councillor Green for the duration of the meeting.

### 32. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Lis Every and Richard Hobbs declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No.8 (Hanging Baskets), both being City of Ely Councillors, and they stated that they would vacate the Chamber prior to consideration of the item.

It was duly proposed, seconded and agreed that Councillor Palmer should take the Chair for the consideration of Agenda item No.8.

### 33. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 34. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman stated that approval had been given for S106 monies to purchase and replace the bus shelters in Market Street, Ely. A preferred design had been chosen, the shelters had been procured and they were now being manufactured. The company was presently arranging permission for street works and it was hoped that the shelters would be installed before Christmas.
- The closing date for the tender documents and quotes for the slipway improvements was Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015. The evaluation of the tenders was to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> November, and it was hoped to appoint the successful contractor on 7<sup>th</sup> December, with completion of the works by the end of March 2016.
- The Littleport Town Team was now one year old and had carried out its first year's Action Plan. One of its most significant achievements was the setting up of a new Community Market in the Adams Heritage Centre, which had been a great example of partnership working. The market had helped to revitalise the town centre, and following an initial trial, it would now run on the first and third Saturday of each month.

Work had begun this week to set up a Soham Town Team and an Action plan would be delivered in 2016.

*It was proposed by the Chairman and agreed by the Committee that the Agenda order be changed to take the Budget Monitoring Report as the next item of business.*

### **35. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report, Q123, previously circulated, which updated Members on the financial position for the Commercial Services Committee for the 2015/16 financial year, based on current forecast year end projections for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Chief Financial Officer reminded Members that due to the cancellation of the Committee meeting planned for 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015, this was the first report to come to Committee. The first quarter financial performance was reported to the Corporate Governance & Finance Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Members' attention was drawn to the tables in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.6 of the report, which summarised the overall revenue and capital positions for the Committee.

The Chief Financial Officer asked Members to note a correction to the figures shown on the third line of paragraph 4.2, as when the report was prepared, it had not included leisure figures. The total capital budget for the year was now £1,427,000 and the forecast spend against this currently stood at £596,000.

In response to a question from Councillor Cheetham regarding the funding for the Commuter Car Park being carried forward, the Chief Financial Officer said that Management Team were looking at the funding.

It was resolved:

To note that this Committee has a projected year end revenue under spend of £64,479 compared to its controllable revenue budget of £1,586,396.

### **36. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a report, Q118, previously circulated, which provided Members with the end of year performance reports and the new Service Delivery Plans 2015/16 for the Open Spaces & Facilities, and Reprographics Services.

The Performance Officer reminded Members that as the Service Delivery Plans had been devised mid-reporting cycle, the performance measures represented projected cumulative figures from November 2015 to March 2016. They reflected the performance measures needed to ensure that the key priorities of the Council were delivered efficiently and effectively.

#### **Open Spaces & Facilities**

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager introduced his Service Plan by saying that he had two Service Delivery Champions, Councillor Lisa Stubbs (for Facilities) and Councillor Neil Hitchin (for Open Spaces). He thanked both Members for their support, saying they had been really helpful.

Within Facilities was the Maintenance Service which was responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Council offices and other assets owned or leased by the Council. In addition, the service was also responsible for the management and maintenance of 10 Public Toilets.

The Office Services element was customer focused and provided facilities management, which included ensuring that the building was legally compliant for both staff and visitors.

The Parks & Open Spaces Team covered the whole of the District and had responsibility for the management, maintenance and development of approximately 68 hectares of public open space. The service was also responsible for the inspection and maintenance of 10 play areas, the management and maintenance of approximately 26 miles of awarded watercourses and 11 closed churchyards.

Members noted that it was hoped to build a new arboriculture team to carry out a tree surgery function. Some of the existing part time members of the team had now moved to full time hours, thanks to funding provided by the Trees Officer.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said that the challenge for the future would be to maintain standards for the existing commitments whilst taking on new areas of open space. To assist with this, an additional member of staff would be recruited and the post funded from S106 monies.

Councillor Stubbs, Service Delivery Champion for Facilities, praised the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager, saying that he had only come to the role in May 2015 and the post had seen many changes since then. She said that he was very proactive and doing a fantastic job. Both he and his team were looking to the future and had embraced the changes that lay before them.

Councillor Every offered her congratulations and asked, as the Parks & Open Spaces Team moved to an entrepreneurial role, what sort of things they would be doing. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager replied that their main role was grass cutting for County Highways. However, the County was cutting back and so his team was working with the City of Ely Council to cover the work. They also supported the County Council regarding grounds maintenance for schools and were quoting for future work. The team had been awarded the contract for Burrough Green.

Councillor Hugo enquired about the possibility of the team taking on "one-off" jobs and was advised that this could work out very well. The team could be very flexible and such jobs would offer a chance of a break from the routine work. Councillor Hugo said he would be in touch the next time Haddenham Parish Council had a job.

Councillor Dupré noted that the target for the take up on playground safety checks had not been achieved. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager explained that the initial programme had gone well, with positive feedback having been received. Staff were being trained to cover an increase in the work. However, there had been a change of landlord at one hub and the work

had been lost. He reiterated that he did not want to take on any commitments and then find that the team could not deliver.

The Chairman offered his congratulations and thanks to all for their excellent work.

### Reprographics

The Director, Commercial & Corporate Services explained that, due to a family emergency, the Reprographics Manager was unable to be present at the meeting. However, he would come back to Committee in January 2016 and give Members a presentation on the work of the Reprographics Service.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mike Bradley, Service Delivery Champion for Reprographics & Document Management addressed the Committee.

He stressed that Reprographics was one of the Council's most important service areas, with some 8,000 documents scanned per month, and over 300 documents being posted per day. Agenda printing, and assisting the Planning department was a very important part of the service. The budget was therefore a very important factor and there was a need to make savings for the future.

Councillor Bradley said the Reprographics Manager was very capable and he was confident that he could assess any future opportunities. Members had already been provided with pigeon holes so they could come and collect their post rather than having it sent out to them.

Councillor Dupré expressed surprise that there was not a set target for the minimisation of paper, and she asked for a report to come to Committee regarding the take up of on-line papers. The Director, Commercial & Corporate Services advised that this would be a corporate matter rather than an individual measure in the Service Plan.

Councillor Bradley said he was working with the Reprographics Manager on this and would be circulating something in due course. He appreciated that some people preferred paper and so was not sure how many would switch over to an electronic version.

The Chairman concluded by saying that as a new stand alone service, it was good that Reprographics had a "home" to come to, and he looked forward to having a presentation in January 2016.

It was resolved:

That Commercial Services Committee note (where available) the outputs for 2015/16 and approve the new performance measures for 2015/16

The Committee considered a report, reference Q119, previously circulated, which informed Members of the feedback on the East Cambridgeshire District Leisure Centre facility mix.

The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager reminded Members that during completion of the RIBA Stage C work, a confidence water area with beach and stand alone seating for 100 persons were identified as potential optional additions to the facility mix. In July 2015 Mace was commissioned to undertake a cost critique of the Leisure Centre project to provide an independent professional view as to potential costs. Inclusion of both these features was considered as part of the process.

Mace confirmed that both Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) were regularly consulted throughout the development of the project and both organisations supported the level of spectator seating (40 seats) included in the RIBA Stage C Report.

Ely Swimming Club had indicated that it expected the pool to meet the Sport England standard for spectator seating for an 8 lane competition pool, which was 250 seats. However, the pool was not intended to serve as a competition pool, but as a community facility to be used by the general public for health and fitness activity.

Mace believed that the concept design included sufficient space poolside to provide up to 100 temporary seats should any swimming club events be held at the Leisure Centre, and discussions would be held regarding the type of seating to be provided.

The confidence water area was considered to be an enhancement rather than a requirement and both Sport England and the ASA supported the exclusion of this from the facility mix.

The learner pool would be constructed with a moveable floor to provide for a variety of uses.

The Chairman thanked Officers for going through the process, saying that the Swimming Club wanted the best and the national bodies had given their responses. He was pleased to note that there would be extra seating.

Councillor Alderson commented that obesity was a growing problem and swimming was one way to help combat it; this would be a healthy living swimming pool rather than for competitions. Councillor Palmer agreed, adding that the Council had looked long and hard at what it could afford. Now was not the time to start changing the facility mix and the project should go forward to the next stage.

Councillor Every congratulated the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager for having taken over the project at this stage of the proceedings, and said the pool operator could put in the “fun” elements.

Councillor Dupré thought the report showed how close to the wire the project really was, and she believed that the proposal was setting aside the two markets the pool had been intended for. It would, she said, be unfortunate

to spoil the mix for what was not an enormous amount of money. Councillor Hugo disagreed, believing the facility mix to be well thought out and the right thing for East Cambridgeshire.

The Chairman echoed Councillor Palmer's earlier comment saying that the Officers had carried out the work, Members should now accept what was proposed and keep the costs down. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the facility mix for the East Cambridgeshire District Leisure Centre, as previously agreed in the RIBA Stage C report (ref Commercial Services Committee, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, agenda item 6) be confirmed.

*At this point in the meeting, Councillors Hobbs and Every vacated the Council Chamber and Councillor Palmer assumed the Chair for the consideration of the next item of business.*

### 38. **HANGING BASKETS**

The Committee considered a report, reference Q120, previously circulated, which proposed the reduction of the grant for hanging baskets to the City of Ely Council and Soham Town Council.

The Tourism & Town Centres Manager introduced her report by reminding the Committee that the City of Ely Council and Soham Town Council were the only local Councils to have received a grant for hanging baskets for a number of years.

It was noted that the management of the grant rested with the Tourism & Towns Centres Service and the Commercial Services Committee respectively. The 2015/16 Service Plan for the Tourism & Town Centres Service had an overarching objective to achieve financial neutrality by 2017/18, and in order to achieve this objective, the Tourism & Town Centres Manager had reviewed the financial commitments of the Service.

The reduction of the Hanging Basket grant by 50% for 2016/17, and its cessation by 2017/18 had been identified as a cost saving measure and it was the responsibility of the respective local Councils to provide their own hanging baskets.

The Committee was unanimous in its support for the recommendation, agreeing that the grant had been an historic anomaly.

It was resolved:

- 1) To decrease the grant to City of Ely Council and Soham Town Council by 50% for 2016/17;
- 2) To cease the grant to City of Ely Council and Soham Town Council from 2017/18.

*Councillors Hobbs and Every re-entered the Council Chamber, and Councillor Hobbs re-assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.*

39. **S106 GRANT UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, reference Q121, previously circulated, which informed Members of the S106 grants awarded between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Appendix 1 to the report set out details of the organisation, a description of the project and the amount of grant awarded.

It was noted that the agreed changes to the grant application process had reduced bureaucracy and quickened the decision making process. Refocusing the application form and assessment criteria was ensuring that the S106 application process was robust and that resources were allocated fairly and appropriately.

The Neighbourhood Support Officer said he could not stress enough how grateful the parishes were to receive funding from the District Council, and he wondered whether the Committee might like to receive update reports on the projects in the future

The Chairman replied that he hoped the local Members were being kept informed and that they would, in turn, keep the Committee informed. He believed the new system was working well and asked whether Members wished to continue receiving reports on a six monthly basis or have an annual review. The consensus of opinion was that the six monthly review should continue.

Councillor Dupré said she was concerned that there were two types of grant which were being approached differently, and she would like to see a way to bring them both together. The Neighbourhood Support Officer concurred that there could be merit in this, but he would first have to discuss the possibility of a “one size fits all” approach with Management.

The Chairman reiterated that it would be important for Members to understand the rationale behind the award of the S106 grants, and he asked the Neighbourhood Support Officer to bring a report to Committee in March 2016.

It was resolved:

That the S106 grants awarded between 1<sup>st</sup> April – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be noted; and

It was further resolved:

That a report be brought to the Commercial Services Committee meeting in March 2016, detailing the rationale for the award of S106 grants.



40. **COMMUNITY FUND GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, reference Q122, 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 Little Downham Book Cafe;
- 2) £1,000 to Stretham Youth Club.

41. **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 6.15pm.