

Minutes of the meeting of the Commercial Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 5.30pm

**PRESENT**

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Chairman)  
Councillor Allen Alderson  
Councillor Lorna Dupré  
Councillor Lis Every  
Councillor Coralie Green  
Councillor Mark Hugo  
Councillor James Palmer (Substitute)  
Councillor Andy Pearson  
Councillor Dan Schumann

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Councillor Hamish Ross  
Allison Conder – Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer  
Tracey Harding – Team Leader, Town Centre Services  
John Hill – Chief Executive  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Hetty Thornton – Performance Officer

20. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

21. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Cheetham, Lavinia Edwards and Stuart Smith.

It was noted that Councillor James Palmer attended the meeting as a Substitute.

22. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

23. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015 and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015 be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

24. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman gave apologies for the absence of the Corporate Unit Manager as, due to a family problem, she was not able to attend. He offered the Committee's thoughts at this time.
- Prior to this meeting, the Committee had visited the Country Park to view the improvements made there. Congratulations were given to the Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer and her team, plus that of the Open Spaces team and the community volunteers, for bringing the area round. It was now of great credit to the District Council and had won a Green Flag for the second year. Jubilee Gardens had also won a Green Flag, for the eleventh year, which had been achieved through a lot of hard work.

25. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a report, Q49, previously circulated, which presented key performance outputs for 2014/2015 and new Service Delivery Plans for 2015/2016 for Leisure & Community Services and for Markets Town Centres & Tourism Services.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that the report provided key performance outputs from the end of the year for the two services. The new Services Delivery Plans supported the new transformation programme.

Community & Leisure Services

The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer stated that all the performance targets for 2014/2015 had been achieved apart from two. The first of these related to participation in the Active Ely programme. A pilot had been held and the feedback from this would have been used to develop the programme but the officer responsible had resigned and left. Staff changes had also meant that the second target, for the Littleport Health Action Plan, had seen support withdrawn.

The new Service Delivery Plan had been set out and showed the numerous areas covered by the service, including community safety, car parks, moorings and the riverside, assets of community value, management of the Section 106 system and the district's leisure facilities. The key risk to achieving the Plan was linked to the recruitment to officer posts. It was hoped that new staff would be in place later this year.

Councillor Lorna Dupré asked how confident officers were that they could recruit to the vacant posts. The Principal Community & Leisure Services Officer acknowledged that there was some risk around delivering the work without those officers, so how the work could be delivered by the team would be looked at.

Councillor Richard Hobbs thought that the team needed key members in place and the signs were looking favourable for recruiting suitable new staff.

Councillor Andy Pearson, the Service Delivery Champion for this service, thought the results of last year showed the dedication and hard work of the team, as only two targets had not been met. The results of this hard work had shown up at Jubilee Gardens and the riverside, which were looking the best ever seen.

### Markets, Town Centres and Tourism Services

The Team Leader, Town Centre Services advised the Committee that, although most of the team were part-time, the service had achieved all its outputs. These included the key targets of: introducing Sunday markets; maintaining free car parking; creating a 'Brand Ely'; and the work carried out by the town teams. Some of this was still ongoing in Littleport in partnership with local Members and businesses.

The Team Leader, Town Centre Services reminded the Committee that the service had been given the target of becoming cost neutral by 2017/18. This meant looking at reducing expenditure whilst increasing income. The cost of the service had been budgeted at £130K but actual costs had been reduced to £35K the last year. This was a huge achievement and was due to the hard work of the team and new ideas being brought in. Some staff had been lost over the year, which had prompted a review of the staffing structure. This had allowed the service to become more efficient.

Increased income had been made from the higher levels of occupancy of the Angel Drove car park, more income from the markets, savings made by dispensing with the courier service collecting and banking cash, an increase in turnover at Oliver Cromwell's House, the food and drink festival plus the decrease in grant to Ely Museum.

For the future: the extension to the Angel Drove car park was ongoing; a new commercial website would be created to earn income and getting a firmer fixed penalty notice scheme. A review of events marketing had made it clear that this was actually making a small loss, as the actual costs had not been attributed to them. This would be looked at in an attempt to make some profit from these events. A market data management system would be used to gain accurate information about the traders. The Council was falling behind with social media, so this would be considered, to add value, and the Council would have a dedicated twitter account. This coming year was full of exciting programmes and the team would be working hard to reduce expenditure to achieve its cost neutral target.

Councillor Richard Hobbs was very impressed with the outputs from last year and the plans for the coming year. When looking at the figures the costs of the car parks, markets, Oliver Cromwell's House and tours had decreased by varying amounts whilst income was up on all of them. These figures were phenomenal and the team should be congratulated and the new plan commended.

Councillor Lis Every also offered congratulations and thought a lot of the success was due to the relationships that had been built up over the last year with other organisations. This had been instrumental in achieving the targets but was not something that was quantifiable. It was noted that although costs were being cut the central costs were going up. The Chief Executive explained that this was due to Council costs being distributed across all services. One issue to be considered was to identify costs of, and the improvements in, the services. The new Trading Company would give services more support, though they should be seen as support and not frontline services. The Council had made enormous in-roads into the budget, mainly on frontline services, but it was hoped that costs for all support services would also fall.

Councillor James Palmer was pleased how well the service was doing. It was an important public focussed service and had improved its relationship with the traders. Councillor Mark Hugo thought it was a fantastic achievement by the service over the last year. With regard car parking spaces, this needed to be progressed to produce even more needed income.

The Chief Executive appraised the Committee of the intention to report to the Asset Development Committee on the plans for the extension of the Angel Drove car park. This had not originally been driven by commercial aspects but by trying to alleviate the problems of parking in nearby residential streets. Unfortunately there was unlimited demand for parking spaces but only a limited supply. A demountable structure had been considered but rejected due to the prohibitive cost per space ratio. Officers along with Councillor Bill Hunt were exploring the possibility of ground extensions to the car park instead. The overall charges being made at that car park and the likely impact on commuters, as even season ticket holders were struggling to find spare places to park, would also be taken into consideration. There were no plans for an extension to the railway station car park by the franchisee.

It was resolved:

That the outputs presented for 2014/2015 (noting any variances) and the new Service Delivery Plans for 2015/2016 be approved.

26. **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report, reference Q50, previously circulated, which set out the details of a public consultation on the option of charging for improved public conveniences.

The Chief Executive stated that his was an essential consultation, under the amended terms of reference, with a view to charging for use of the public conveniences. This would help in improving provision and raising income. Once the consultation was concluded a report would be brought back to this Committee.

Councillor Richard Hobbs had been asking for this review for some time, as the public conveniences were a huge cost. Visitors to the district should expect the facilities to be of a good standard.

Councillor James Palmer reminded the Committee that the public conveniences in Soham were being handed over to Soham Town Council and the ones at Wicken Fen had already been handed over to others. The state, and costs, of the toilets was currently unacceptable and a balance was needed where the tourist paid for producing an excellent product.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Corporate Unit Manager be instructed to carry out a public consultation on the option for introducing charges for improved public conveniences;
- (ii) That the amended terms of reference and timetable for the review provided at Appendix 1 be approved;
- (iii) That the amended statement of consultation provided at Appendix 2 be approved.

27. **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND ANNUAL REPORTS**

The Committee received a report, reference Q51, previously circulated, which sought to appoint representatives to the outside bodies under the remit of this Committee, receive the annual reports and to conduct a review of those outside bodies.

Councillor Lis Every thought Members did not know the processes involved in drawing up the list of outside bodies and noted that some of the information was out-of-date. This meant that the outside bodies ought to be reviewed. Councillor Richard Hobbs supported this idea and suggested this be brought back to the next meeting.

The Chief Executive suggested that the representatives need to update the Committee and the Committee should review the outside bodies, some of which were important bodies. He suggested that the Committee confirm this year's representatives and then undertake a review.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the appointment of the proposed nominated representatives to those outside bodies which fall within the remit of the Commercial Services Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be confirmed;
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) That a review be conducted of those outside bodies which fall within the remit of the Commercial Services Committee.

28. **COMMUNITY FUND GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee received a report, reference Q52, previously circulated, which noted the grants offered under delegated powers from the Community Fund grant scheme.

It was resolved:

That the grant offered under officer-delegated powers, of £1000 to the Little Downham Youth Group for the Downham Riders Motorcycle Project, be noted.

29. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

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

The Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.17pm.