

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on 15th January 2019 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Allen Alderson
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor Lorna Dupré (Substitute for Councillor Christine Whelan)

Councillor Lis Every
Councillor Mark Hugo
Councillor Dan Schumann
Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Jo Webber (Substitute for Councillor Lavinia Edwards)

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
John Steel – Management Accountant
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer

25. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

26. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lavinia Edwards and Christine Whelan.

It was noted that Councillor Webber would substitute for Councillor Edwards and Councillor Dupré for Councillor Whelan for the duration of this meeting.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman did not make announcements.

30. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Management Accountant presented a report (reference T176, previously circulated) which provided Members with details of the financial position for services under the Community Services Committee.

This was the third quarterly report for the 2018/19 financial year and detailed actual expenditure incurred as at 31st December 2018 and current projections as to the year-end position.

Paragraph 3.4 of the report set out the significant variances of actual spend compared to profiled budgeted spend at the end of December.

Councillor Dupré asked about the variance in the capital expenditure for the Local Authority Trading Company. The Management Accountant replied that it referred to the loan from the Council and the Director Commercial said that Members would be provided with a written explanation.

There being no further questions or comments,

It was resolved:

1. To note that this Committee is currently projected to end the year with a balanced budget, with net spend of £1,623,211.
2. To note that the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £3,109,562, this being an overspend on the revised budget of £402,595.

31. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – SIX MONTH UPDATE REPORTS

The Performance Management Officer presented a report (reference T177, previously circulated) which informed Members of the progress made in the previous six months within Service Delivery Plans for Communities & Partnerships, Open Spaces and Leisure Services.

Councillor Dupré requested clarity regarding the rows on the charts where two different arrows were shown for the same row. She asked that in future, it

be indicated more clearly which items in a row were represented by which arrow.

Communities & Partnerships:

It was noted that some aspects of the performance measures relating to the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan had been exceeded.

Councillor Every said she had not understood the enormous amount of work that went into getting the Green Flag accreditation, and how important it was to the District. This was a high point and she congratulated the Communities & Partnerships Manager on the achievement.

Open Spaces:

There was only one low point in this update report; the development of a website page promoting services to Parish and Town Councils had not been achieved because it had been necessary to prioritise other areas due to capacity problems. It was still very much in the development stages. Councillor Dupré asked when the website was likely to be finished and the Performance Management Officer said she was unsure if it would be within the financial year. Winning contracts was a priority, but there were no timescales at the moment.

It was noted that Councillor Lisa Stubbs, Service Delivery Champion, had submitted comments saying that the 6 month report for Open Spaces was very impressive. It showed the excellent performance and hard work put in by all the Officers involved. The Performance Management Officer added that the Service was a resounding success and brought in a not insignificant income to the Council.

Leisure Services:

Members noted that all targets were being met and adhered to.

Councillor Dupré asked whether any comments had been received from the Service Delivery Champion, Councillor Richard Hobbs, and Councillor Every said it was her understanding that he had sent them in. The Chairman asked that the comments be circulated to the members of the Committee.

There being no further comments or questions,

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the progress made against the priorities of the Council including areas where the service has been underachieving and where outstanding performance was delivered;
- 2) To note the comments made by Service Delivery Champions.

32. DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2023 AND ACTION PLAN

The Communities & Partnerships Manager presented a report (reference T178, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to note and approve the Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2023 and Action Plan.

The background to, and the aims of the Strategy were set out in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.6 and the objectives in paragraph 4.2 of the submitted report.

Members were reminded that this item had been brought back to Committee in the light of comments made at the previous Community Services meeting in September 2018.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager stated that the section on Planning, on page 16 of the Strategy document, had been expanded to include new information and it had been synergised with the Council's consultation process to ensure it would be effective.

The Chairman noted that Licensing had Taxi Forums, and asked if a forum for licensed premises could be added. The Communities & Partnerships Manager said he would discuss it with the Service Lead.

Councillor Hugo said he was pleased to see the changes that had been made to the document, especially with regard to Planning. He apologised if it had seemed that he was being overly critical at the last meeting, but he had simply wished to point out where there were restrictions.

The Chairman concluded by thanking the Communities & Partnerships Manager for a very thorough report.

It was resolved:

That the Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2023 and Action Plan be approved.

33. DRAFT GRANTS REVIEW

The Committee considered a report (reference T179, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to note and approve the outcome of the Community Grants Review.

It was noted that the Council administered three community grants pots: Section 106, Facilities Improvement Grant and the Community Grant Fund.

Paragraphs 5.1 to 7.6 of the report provided an overview of the key outcomes achieved by each of the community grants between 2015 and 2018, based on data provided from the application organisations. A map at paragraph

7.7 showed the geographical spread of the three different community grant pots during this time.

Members noted that there were a number of options available that the Council could adopt moving forward to ensure that the aims of the review were achieved:

- Option 1 – maintain the status quo;
- Option 2 – revised award criteria (in 2019/20);
- Option 3 - Decrease funding using revised award criteria (in 2019/20); and
- Option 4 - Increase funding using revised award criteria (in 2019/20).

The table in paragraph 9.2 of the report set out the areas of focus and actions to be taken in order that the Council could improve the effectiveness of the grants to meet the needs of communities.

Councillor Every said she was pleased that the research had been done but she had concerns about the Communications Strategy and its ability to encourage applications. She did not consider the 'spread' to be fair, and grants did not always reach the people who needed them.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith noted that Soham was not mentioned in the report and the Director Commercial said that it had already received quite a lot of grant funding.

Councillor Dupré declared herself to be perplexed because the review did not appear to contain any consultation with past, present or future recipients of funding. She duly proposed that consideration of the item be deferred to allow for consultation, and a further report be brought back to Committee.

The Chairman responded by saying that the Council had reviewed its own grants process and found it to be wanting. Councillor Dupré reiterated her point about consultation and the Chairman replied that he was content that the Council's product had been reviewed and a solution put forward.

There was no seconder for Councillor Dupré's proposal and the motion was declared lost.

In response to a request from Councillor Dupré, the Director Commercial explained that S106 grants could not be changed, but they were available throughout the year and were 'pushed' twice yearly. The aim was to raise the profile of the Community Facilities and Community Grant Funds. Councillor Every added that this was about the process, not drilling down into each fund; the criteria would be another piece of work.

Speaking of grants in general, Councillor Webber made the point that feedback was very important to the organisations that were not awarded funding. Much work went into their bids and it would be helpful for them to know why the bid failed and what they should do to increase their chances in the future. Councillor Schumann raised the issue of the repeat funding of small

grants, saying that a lot of funders stipulated that recipients could not receive an award two years in a row. If an organisation had received funding once, it could not apply for 12 months, but could reapply after that. By taking this approach, it helped to spread the small amount of funding available. He recalled the Council having had grant funding through an endowment from the Cambridgeshire Community Fund (CCF) and asked if this was the same as ECDC's Community Grant Fund. The Director Commercial said it was separate and when Councillor Schumann asked what had happened to the CCF, she said she would look into it.

Taking up on Councillor Schumann's point about the frequency of receiving grant aid, the Chairman asked Members if this should be incorporated into the review. Councillor Dupré said she would be firmly opposed to it without consultation with interested parties.

Councillor Hugo agreed, saying that some organisations relied on their grants year in and out, and without them they would not exist. He believed the process should be easier.

Councillor Webber said those organisations that were well versed in making applications tended to be the ones that received grants. It could be confusing when processes changed and the smaller groups should be helped. She thought that one application per group per year was reasonable.

Councillor Dupré requested and the Committee agreed that the Officer's recommendation be expanded to include paragraph 9.2 of the report. Whereupon,

It was resolved;

- 1) That the detail of the Community Grants review be noted;
- 2) That the recommendations, as set out in Option 2 at paragraphs 8.2, and 9.2 of the submitted report, be approved.

34. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT SCHEME

The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager presented a report (reference T180, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to consider the launch of the Community Transport Scheme.

The Committee was reminded that the District Council currently allocated £15,000 per annum in its budget to support local Community Transport Schemes in recognition of the important role they played in providing much needed transport for residents, especially those in more rural areas where scheduled buses did not operate or only provided a limited service.

Members awarded £13,500 to Ely & Soham Association for Community Transport (ESACT) and £1,500 to the East Cambridgeshire Social Car Scheme in 2016/17. However, the grant to ESACT was initially withheld pending completion of an investigation into the funding and operation of the

organisation and that of its sister organisations in Fenland (FACT) and Huntingdonshire (HACT) by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC).

The grant offer was withdrawn by this Committee in November 2017 as the length of the investigation meant that the monies would not be spent by the 31st March 2018 deadline. The Grant Scheme process was put on hold in 2017/18 due to the ongoing investigation and the monies carried forward to the next financial year.

The County Council's investigation set out a number of actions for the Community Transport Providers to complete and the majority of these had been done. CCC was now satisfied that pending the completion of outstanding actions, FH&E (the new single board overseeing FACT, HACT and ESACT) would be considered a fit and proper organisation to contract with the Council.

A draft funding agreement for the Council's grant scheme had been created, setting out the outcomes and targets to be achieved and how the grant would be monitored. An example was provided at Appendix 1, and the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager advised that it would be good practice for the Council to adopt such a document. The draft agreement and financial details would be brought back to Committee.

Councillor Dupré considered the deadline of 22nd March to be quite tight, especially for the Parish Councils, and she asked if it could be extended to give them a bit more time. The Director Commercial informed Members that there had to be a definite end date but the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager could be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Chairman, to be flexible.

Councillor Dupré remarked that the grant available was particularly large for this year and she presumed that it would revert to the original £15,000 in the next. She said that applicants must be made very clear about this and bids tailored accordingly.

Councillor Every enquired whether the value of grants was to be capped, as some applicants put in big professional bids. The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager replied that awards were based on scores; she would look at the criteria but there was no cap on the minimum or maximum award of funding. The Director Commercial interjected to say that she would advise against having a cap. The money would be targeted to have a maximum benefit and just because someone applied for a large amount, it did not mean they would necessarily receive it.

Councillor Every continued, saying that she did not like the idea of extending deadlines, because it would make her wonder about the applicant's approach. If the application period was long enough, an extension would not be needed.

The Chairman duly suggested and Members agreed that in the interests of being fair to everyone, the deadline should be set for the end of April 2019.

Councillor Schumann said that he had been a founding Trustee of Ely & Soham Dial a Ride. Speaking from experience, he said it was important that applicants knew what they wanted to achieve with the funding. Transport was the No. 1 barrier for many people living in the District and life could be lonely, difficult and isolating for many, and not just for the elderly. He felt that giving people the ability to leave the house was a really important part of what the Council could do. Members should be absolutely clear about what they wanted and that the funding would get to the people most in need before launching into the process.

The Chairman reminded Members that the criteria had already been approved and the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager added that applicants were asked what they needed and why, and what their organisation did. The scheme was quite open about the types of project it would support.

Councillor Alderson said his Ward was quite rural and some people either did not have a car or were too old to drive. He was aware of a woman who organised trips for those needing to get to hospital or doctor's appointments etc, and he wondered if she would be eligible to apply for funding. He was advised that she should contact the Public Transport Section at the County Council, but she should also be aware that there was a very rigorous process which was very heavily regulated.

Councillor Hugo asked if there was any way to publicise and promote the scheme when grants were awarded. The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager replied that there was a Community Transport page on the Council's website.

Councillor Smith wished to know if the volunteers for the Social Car Scheme could cover the whole of the District. The Director Commercial replied that the Scheme only covered Ely; it was much more complicated and very heavily regulated.

There being no further comments or questions,

It was resolved:

- i. That the update on the Cambridgeshire County Council investigation into Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT), Huntingdonshire Association for Community Transport (HACT), and Ely & Soham Association for Community Transport Scheme (ESACT), be noted;
- ii. That the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager be instructed to invite applications for the Community Transport Scheme; and
- iii. That the timetable for applications to run from 1st February 2019 to 30th April 2019 be agreed.

35. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING (LEISURE CENTRES & SPORT FACILITIES) 2018-19: UPDATE REPORT

The Senior Leisure Services Officer presented a report (reference T181, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to agree further

grant funding allocations for the 2018/19 financial year for leisure centres and sport facilities.

The Committee noted that two substantial applications had been received since its last meeting in September. The Ellesmere Centre had requested a grant of £5,000 towards the replacement of and additions to gym equipment, and the Ross Peers Sports Centre had requested £5,555 for improvements to a studio (a converted squash court). Each application, in its own way, offered a significant development of the facilities or services and support was recommended for both.

Councillor Schumann queried the use of the studio at the Ross Peers centre. Having explained the background to the conversion of the former squash court, the Senior Leisure Services Officer said he believed it would still be a general purpose studio, but he could find out precisely, if Members so wished. When it was converted, it was used by a number of groups, but it was not fit for purpose and the acoustics were very poor. He would be happy to query the precise number of users and range of activities.

Councillor Schumann responded saying that the small hall at the Centre was empty much of the time and the use of the squash courts was limiting. He was not saying that there was not a plan, merely that it was not mentioned in the report. The Chairman said that having seen the studio, he wondered whether the grant would help the Centre to achieve an income stream.

Councillor Every presumed that there was a Business Plan, but if there was no strategy or plan for the revenue stream, she queried whether the Centre might need help with running the activities.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer stated that the Ross Peers Centre presented a whole range of challenges, not least because of the age of the building, its 1980's configuration and the resources available. In business terms it was still treading water, and needed to think differently/ambitiously to move forward. He had taken the view that if this project moved them forward, it would improve the income stream, but then a look could be taken at where it would be in 3 – 5 years time.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith asked if there was potential for the school to use the studio and make a financial contribution. The Senior Leisure Services Officer thought there would only be room for a limited number of people, but it was worth asking.

Councillor Hugo enquired whether the grant in 2016 came with assurances and was advised that the Centre had underspecified their capacity to deliver. However, things had improved significantly since then and the Senior Leisure Services Officer believed the staff had now learned enough to be able to implement this time.

The Chairman believed that determination of the Ross Peers application should be deferred and the Centre be asked to provide a business plan for the change to the room. When asked if a delay in the award of grant funding would cause problems, the Director Commercial said it would not

cause any issues and it would be better for the matter to come back to Committee. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

- 1) That the Ellesmere Centre be awarded the recommended grant of £4,950;
- 2) That the award of grant aid to the Ross Peers Sports Centre be deferred, and a business plan be requested in respect of the proposed improvements to the studio;
- 3) That a further report on the Ross Peers grant application be brought back to the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 12th March 2019.

36. DISTRICT SPORTS & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT

The Senior Leisure Services Officer presented a report (reference T182, previously circulated) which reviewed the development of sport and physical activity in East Cambridgeshire.

Members were reminded that the adoption of the countywide 'Let's Get Moving' project in 2017 allowed for the introduction of a new Activity Coordinator post with a strengthened focus on the more inactive population. This fitted perfectly with the Sport & Physical Activity Strategy and aligned closely with the ECDC Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

The recent decision of the County Health Committee to extend funding for the 'Let's Get Moving' project to June 2020 was welcome affirmation of the project's value and would allow the Council to continue building its momentum and scope.

The opening of The Hive and the Littleport Leisure Centre had increased capacity and offered comprehensive single site facilities with the associated programming opportunities. However, such programmes would need to be supported by consultation and community engagement to ensure that the Council was responding to community needs and that people were aware of the available opportunities.

Officers were looking to engage more directly with community groups and partner agencies and strengthen partnerships (e.g. health and education). A more structured approach would be taken to exercise referrals as it was recognised that such schemes could help to reduce the incidence or manage the impact of a wide range of health conditions. Medical professionals had the option of 'prescribing' a structured activity programme in collaboration with a fitness or leisure provider and this would sit well alongside the 'Let's Get Moving' project.

The Chairman concluded by praising the Activity Coordinator, saying that the work she was carrying out was 'incredible'. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

37. THE HIVE: PROGRESS REPORT

The Senior Leisure Services Officer presented a report which provided Members with an update on the progress of the new leisure centre, The Hive.

It was noted that monthly visits had steadily increased and growth was about evenly split between pool and sports usage, with fitness attendances stable. The outdoor pitch was now well used by junior clubs in particular, and the balance between junior and adult use was 65:35.

Sports Hall prices were being revised from January 2019 to come closer in line with other local facilities, but other prices were unaffected. This was part of a wider development in the sports activity programme, which connected to the ECDC Sport & Physical Activity Strategy. A new Exercise Referral Coordinator would be commencing in January and Officers were working with the centre to build on the 'Let's Get Moving' programme and schools' use.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer said it would be important to ensure that the 'nuts and bolts' of the facility were looked after. There had been some complaints about customer service and facilities management, but it was not thought that they were consistent issues. The cleaning regime had been strengthened and would be monitored.

Councillor Hugo asked whether or not prices had been reduced. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that peak prices had come down by an average of 36%, and off-peak by an average of 20%. GLL had recognised that the prices needed to be reset, and they had done this in order to make life easier for users of the centre.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith recalled that not long after The Hive had opened, somebody had highlighted that some people wanting to take out membership felt they were not being dealt with properly because they were not comfortable using computers. The Senior Leisure Services Officer acknowledged that this had been the subject of a recurring discussion with GLL. They guaranteed that there would always be a member of management on hand to give assistance, but the centre was locked into digital technology.

(Councillor Schumann left the meeting at 7.00pm)

Councillor Every said she was surprised that The Hive's prices were higher and she sought assurance that lower prices would not impact on the business plan. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that any risk sat with GLL; they had adopted Cambridge pricing when the centre first opened, (which was fairly typical across the county) but now prices were set where they needed to be to fit more with the Council's agenda.

Councillor Hugo wished to know what publicity the price reductions had received and was informed that the centre relied on on-line marketing. He felt that the scope could be widened, and the Senior Leisure Services Officer said he would raise this with GLL.

There being no further comments or questions,

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

38. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

The Committee reviewed the Community Services Forward Agenda Plan.

It was noted that a report on the Ross Peers grant application would be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was resolved;

That the Forward Agenda Plan, and the comments made thereon, be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.