

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on
21st November 2017 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor Lavinia Edwards
Councillor Lis Every
Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Christine Whelan

OFFICERS

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer
Ian Smith – Finance Manager
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Agenda Item No. 9)

*The Chairman welcomed Councillor Whelan to her first meeting of the
Community Services Committee.*

22. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

23. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen Alderson, Mark Hugo and Dan Schumann.

There were no substitutions.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lis Every declared an interest in two items: Agenda Item No. 6 (Presentation – Voluntary & Community Action for East Cambridgeshire), being Chairman of the Trustees, and Agenda Item No.13 (Community Transport Grants), being the Council's representative on ESACT (Ely & Soham Association of Community Transport).

25. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

27. PRESENTATION – VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ACTION FOR EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE (VCAEC)

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

Mr Hawkes commenced by explaining that the work of the organisation comprised four elements:

- Volunteer Centre;
- East Cambs Social Car Scheme;
- Helping Hands; and
- Membership Support.

It was noted that a number of the Volunteer Centres had closed and apart from Ely, Centres remained in Huntingdonshire, Peterborough and Fenland districts.

The Ely Volunteer Centre administered the 'Do It' website for local organisations and posted volunteering opportunities. At present there were approximately 300 opportunities available.

The Car Scheme had 35 volunteers (31 drivers and 4 Co-ordinators) and offered a service for essential journeys to hospitals etc, to those who were unable to drive themselves or use public transport; of those journeys, 70% were health related.

The Helping Hands scheme offered a gardening service for those who were unable to tend their gardens. The scheme had 2 employed supervisors (on a job share basis) and the team worked 5 days per week for 50 weeks per annum.

With regard to membership support, Mr Hawkes said that VCAEC had 140 member organisations, and the Ely Centre helped them with their governance and gave other assistance, as required.

In terms of outputs, approximately 60 volunteers were placed within the District each year.

The Social Car Scheme had covered 104,000 miles in the last year, equating to 3,500 journeys and 7,500 volunteer hours. This service did not require any promotion, as it was spread by word of mouth. It was anticipated that the service would notch up 114,000 miles in the present year.

Helping Hands dealt with 300 projects each year and was currently busy until Christmas; this was another scheme that did not require any promotion.

The Ely Centre carried out work for other organisations and also worked with the other Volunteer Centres to see where they could attract funding for projects. They were looking to re-launch a package of volunteering through the Centres in January 2018.

Mr Hawkes thanked the District Council for its continued funding. He reiterated that ECDC was VCAEC's only funder, and without its help, the organisation could not survive. He drew Members' attention to the third slide in his presentation which set out the social value to East Cambridgeshire. There had been some concern when other sources of funding were lost, but things were running well and a small surplus had been made last year. Investment had been made in an on-line booking system and this had allowed the organisation to grow. The demand for services was there and VCAEC remained busy.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith asked Mr Hawkes if it would be easy to attract more volunteers if more funding was available, and what sort of sum he would need. He replied that most volunteers were 'walk ins', but with more funding he could do more and invest back into the District. Training was now arranged on a needs basis and opened up to others, as he could not afford to promote training sessions that subsequently did not happen. More funding would generate more money, but investment was required in the first place.

Money would make life easier, but a lack of it did not cause the daily struggle. One of his concerns was that the volunteers had to man the Centre when he was on holiday; he felt that they should not have to take on this responsibility.

The Chairman asked what checks were carried out on potential volunteers. Mr Hawkes replied that if someone was just working in the office, they did not need to have a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check. However, if they would be working with vulnerable people, they would require a DBS check and be able to provide two references.

There being no further comments or questions, the Chairman thanked Mr Hawkes for a very impressive presentation.

28. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a report, S170, previously circulated, which provided Members with details of the financial position for services within the remit of the Community Services Committee.

The Finance Manager stated that this was the second report for the 2017/18 financial year and detailed the actual expenditure incurred as at 30th September 2017 and current projections as to the yearend position.

It was noted that there was a projected saving of £15,000 on the approved revenue budget.

The projected capital overspend was due to the drawdown of the loan to the East Cambs Trading Company Ltd.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note that this Committee is projected to end the year with a saving on its approved revenue budget of £15,000, this is a combination of underspends on expenditure budgets and additional income on income budgets;
- 2) To note that the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £15,455,680.

29. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – SIX MONTH REPORT UPDATES

The Committee received a report, S171, previously circulated, which informed Members of the progress made of the previous six months within Service Delivery Plans for Open Spaces, Leisure Services, and Communities & Partnership Services.

The Performance Management Officer said that for the first time in performance monitoring reports, Service Delivery Leads had been asked to identify high level risks which could affect the Council corporately. Where applicable, they were reflected at the bottom of each report and would be allocated onto the Risk Register if necessary.

Open Spaces

There was a capacity issue regarding development of a website information page to promote services to Town and Parish Councils. This was due to recent changes within the staffing of the team and once a new member of staff had been employed, the measure would be reviewed.

Councillor Every noted that the team had been seconded to the Trading Company, and she sought reassurance that the lack of staffing would not impinge negatively on the open spaces work for the District Council. The Director, Commercial replied that the Council was the core client and remained the most important.

It was noted that the Green Flag Accreditation status had been retained for both the Country Park and Jubilee Gardens.

Leisure Services

There was nothing to be highlighted in respect of the performance measures, and Members did not have any questions to put to the Performance Management Officer.

Communities & Partnerships

It was noted that this service was achieving over and above its targets.

Councillor Every offered her congratulations, saying she was aware of the amount of work that went into achieving the performance measures.

The Chairman invited Councillor Hobbs, Service Delivery Champion, to comment on the update. Councillor Hobbs said that Service Delivery Plans needed to be considered by all sectors of the Council and not just in isolation; he felt there should be stronger links within the performance reports with other vital services.

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.

30. LEISURE CENTRE UPDATE

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Richard Hobbs, Service Delivery Champion for Leisure & Community Services, gave an update on progress with the new leisure centre.

The Infrastructure & Strategy Manager and the Senior Leisure Services Officer were constantly having meetings with the developer and he himself had visited the site today. He was pleased to be able to report that the contractor, Pellikaan, was working well with the teams that had been picked to take the project forward and the workmanship was of an extremely high standard.

The hydraulics in the trainer pool were working and the tiling of the main pool was due to start in the next week.

There had been deliberations as to whether the upstairs area should be kept as one big room or split into something smaller. Working with Pellikaan and GLL, it had been decided to have three distinct areas with a plant room in

the middle, a larger room on one side and a smaller room on the other side. This arrangement would provide a room for meetings, when required.

The colour scheme would have light walls with signage in green and gold, and with 90% of the windows already installed, the light areas of the building would look very impressive.

Councillor Hobbs continued, saying that at the moment, everything was on track for the facility to be completed and handed over in April 2018 although he was not sure how long GLL would need before opening to the public. Works were well on schedule and while there was little spare space, there would be room for the leisure centre to grow. He was very content with how things were going and he wished to congratulate the East Cambs Officers who were involved in the project.

Councillor Every asked about progress with coach parking. The Director, Commercial replied that it would be necessary to submit a planning application, and work was being undertaken on costings at the moment, but it was on track. Councillor Hobbs added that it had been realised some months ago that coach parking on the site would not be available in time for the Cathedral Christmas Fair, and this was unfortunate.

Councillor Whelan asked if a formal progress report was to be issued so that members of the public could be kept updated. It was noted that each verbal update would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and these would be available to the public. Whereupon,

It was resolved;

To note the update and the comments made thereon.

31. NEW DISTRICT LEISURE CENTRE: MOBILISATION ISSUES

The Committee received a report, S172, previously circulated, which outlined the proposed approach to mobilisation and operation of the new leisure centre.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer drew Members' attention to paragraphs 4.1 – 4.5 of his report which set out the practical issues regarding the closure of the Paradise Pool, the opening of The Hive, and the change of management contractor to GLL at The Hive. He said that, in general terms, he was comfortable with where things were and he did not anticipate there being any problems.

The most critical business transfer issues were covered by TUPE provisions. The different facility mix of the two sites limited the scope of any commercial conflicts, but some business elements might require a degree of negotiation. Initial discussions had taken place at an operational level, but these would be developed further in order to ensure that any issues were resolved without affecting staff, customers or the efficiency of the opening process.

It was noted that the service specification and related documentation to the leisure management agreement provided the framework for the service and strategic outcomes. The specification defined the required outcome and performance standards for each of the 26 service elements and established the planning and reporting processes to ensure that the standards were achieved. It also identified core strategic themes and objectives and invited the operator to define how those themes and objectives would be addressed.

Further discussions would be held with the operator over the coming months and Officers would bring update reports back to the Committee as the work progressed prior to the opening of the new facility.

Councillor Every asked the Senior Leisure Officer if he was content that there would be synergy on the day that the new facility opened. She was concerned that it should not be 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' if there were not enough staff for all the facilities across the District. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that this matter was not being taken lightly; the GLL manager had already acknowledged that recruitment was a problem in Cambridgeshire and resources would be in place to address the issue. The new leisure centre would create job opportunities and he was confident that there would not be a mass exodus, although the other centres might need help to fill the gaps.

The Chairman commented that staff turnover was ongoing because market forces prevailed, and he asked how many staff would be needed. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that the figure in the tender submission was 40 FTE, although the head-count would be subject to fluctuation.

The Chairman concluded by thanking the Senior Leisure Services Officer for all his hard work and asked that his thanks also be passed on to the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager.

It was resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

32. DISTRICT SPORTS & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY: UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report, S173, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to review the development of sport and physical activity in East Cambridgeshire.

Members were reminded that a Sport & Physical Activity Strategy was endorsed by the Commercial Services Committee in November 2016. The primary purpose of the Strategy was to respond to a growing national policy interest in population-wide physical activity levels, and to build this consideration more explicitly into the Council's approaches to facility provision and support. It applied most obviously to the new leisure centre and the Authority's work with the local Trusts, but also to emerging projects and new developments.

Work on the leisure centre and the closure of the Mepal Outdoor Centre had taken up much time, but Sophie Edwards, Physical Activity Coordinator, was taking forward much of the work that had been identified.

It was noted that her post was funded by Cambridgeshire County Council as part of the 'Let's Get Moving' programme and was aimed at building participation in physical activity, particularly among those who were less active. She was working on a range of local partnerships and programme developments, and follow up for people who had completed structured weight management programmes. She was also working with schools with a view to developing an activity programme to support children (and their families) with weight problems.

The Chairman noted that the Coordinator's post was funded up to September 2019 and the Senior Leisure Services Officer said the Authority was as interested in building capacity as much as the actual programmes. The Coordinator was going along to the healthy walks and getting to know people, in the hope that the volunteers to go on to run the walks.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith made the point that there were many families on a low income budget and their children could not participate in programmes because of a lack of money. She asked if there were any funding streams to help in such circumstances. The Senior Leisure Services Officer replied that this was something that required further work. 'Street Games' was accessible and affordable but consideration could possibly be given to centres getting focussed support for programmes.

There being no further comments or questions,

It was resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

33. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING (LEISURE CENTRES AND SPORT FACILITIES) 2017/18: UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report, S174, previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on progress with funding allocations for the 2017/18 financial year for leisure centres and sport facilities.

The works at the Ellesmere Centre had been completed, and the new membership system at Bottisham Village College was still awaited, but expected to proceed.

With regard to Burwell Sports Centre, Members noted that £12,000 was only part funding for the works to the roof. Funding from other partners was still awaited and while it was hoped that this would be forthcoming, there was a possibility that the Committee might need or wish to consider some unallocated funding to go to Burwell. It would first be necessary to identify the shortfall and then a further report would come to Committee.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer said that work to the bar at the EOSA clubhouse was ongoing. He had asked for an update from them on three occasions but no information had yet been received; he would report back in due course.

The Hockey Club had a project for a new pitch and this would cost in the region of £250,000. Most of the funding was in the pipeline, but a report would be brought back to Committee if necessary.

Members noted that one centre wished to develop the provision of archery and might need a small amount of assistance. Other projects had nothing to do with the leisure centres but could need support. A report with further recommendations would come to Committee in January 2018.

The Chairman asked at what stage funding would be given, once it had been agreed. The Senior Leisure Services Officer said it was always based on hard evidence. Once a project had been completed and was ready to run, the funding would be released on receipt of an invoice. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

Councillor Every left the meeting at 6.42pm.

34. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANTS

The Committee received a report, S175, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to consider proposals relating to previously allocated grants for Community Transport.

The Director, Commercial drew Members' attention to paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of her report, which set out the background to the issue.

It was noted the grant of £1,500 had been paid to the East Cambridgeshire Social Car Scheme, but the Council had not paid the £13,500 grant to Ely & Soham Association of Community Transport (ESACT).

The grant was contingent on there being a satisfactory resolution of the ongoing investigation into ESACT and a transport review being carried out by the County Council.

The Director reiterated that the grant was not being withdrawn because of the investigation, as had been previously suggested in the press.

The Committee noted that it was unlikely the ESACT investigation would be concluded in the short term. However, in the event that it was concluded satisfactorily, ESACT would be invited to apply for grant funding.

In the meantime, it was not recommended that the Council should continue to hold the grant allocation as the money could help to bring forward other projects. It was therefore recommended that the unspent grant funds be

rolled forward and made available for community transport in 2018/19. This would enable meaningful applications to come forward and Officers would seek to maximise the available funds to ensure the fund was utilised in the most efficient and effective manner.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i. To withdraw the grant offered to ESACT, as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report; and
- ii. To roll forward unspent grant funds from 2016/17 and 2017/18 for allocation in 2018/19 as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report.

35. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

The Committee reviewed the Community Services Forward Agenda Plan.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Director agreed that it would be too early to take the District Wide Tourism Strategy to the meeting of Committee in January 2018; this item would be rescheduled for 14th March 2018.

There being no other comments or queries,

It was resolved;

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

The meeting closed at 6.43pm.