

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held in the Vernon Cross Room, Ely Museum, Ely on 26th June 2018 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 Mark Hugo
Councillor Dan Schumann
Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Christine Whelan

OFFICERS

Emma Grima – Director, Commercial
Shona McKenzie – Neighbourhood Support Officer
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

5. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Allen Alderson.

There was no substitution.

It was noted that Councillor Schumann was expected to attend the meeting and would arrive shortly.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Ambrose Smith declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 6 (Service Level Agreement Funding - Leisure Centres & Sport Facilities, 2018/19), being Chairman of the Trustees of Littleport Leisure. He said that he would take no part in the discussion and would leave the room before the vote was taken.

7. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 14th March and 24th May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman thanked Members for their continued support.

8. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

9. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FUNDING (LEISURE CENTRES AND SPORT FACILITIES) 2018/19

In the absence of the Senior Leisure Services Officer, the Director, Commercial presented a report (reference T36, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to agree initial funding allocations for the 2018/19 financial year for leisure centres and sport facilities.

The Director said that any questions she was unable to answer would be passed to the Senior Leisure Services Officer for a response.

The Committee was reminded that grants were offered to leisure facility providers to support material improvements to their services to strengthen the long term sustainability of the facility, to extend the activity opportunities for the local community, or both.

(Councillor Whelan joined the meeting at 5.35pm.)

Submissions had been received from two facilities:

- Bottisham Sports Centre (Bottisham Village College) had requested a grant to buy a new automated pool vacuum. The rationale for the purchase was that it would improve the day to day condition of the pool and give users better water quality.

No partnership funding had been put forward, but the amount requested from ECDC was modest and the Trust which now governed Bottisham was engaged in a significant improvement programme for the facilities as a whole, which was expected to cost around £500,000.

It was recommended that the request for £1,000 grant funding be supported.

- Littleport Leisure had requested a grant to assist with a programme of social activities aimed at members of the community who might be isolated or deterred by circumstances in engaging in centre activities. User charges would initially be kept low to encourage new participants, while protecting the long term sustainability of the programme.

The programme costs included both actual direct costs and internal re-charges for the use of facilities. This and the adoption of entry level

pricing while the programme became established had been discussed and agreed in principle with the Centre management.

It was recommended that a grant of £6,640, to cover the cost of start-up, external instructors and a 50% contribution to the cost of pool hire, all to March 2019, be supported.

Members noted that submissions had not yet been received in respect of Burwell Sports Centre or the Ellesmere Centre. The Senior Leisure Services Officer was working with the Ely Outdoor Sports Association regarding a proposal which was expected later in the summer and further details were awaited regarding a possible submission from the Ross Peers Sports Centre. No application was expected from the Paradise Sports Centre as it had access to other funding sources and was carrying out its own programme of modernisation.

Officers would continue to engage with the other centres and proposals would be brought to Committee as they emerged.

Councillor Hugo said that the Haddenham Sports Pavilion was now being heavily used and would be seeking a grant for improvements; a key decision would be needed in September. The Director replied that this would come to the Community Services Committee but if it was just for facilities, she could approve it under delegated authority. The Chairman interjected to ask that it be signed off in consultation with himself or the Vice Chairman.

At this point, the Chairman left the room and Councillor Every assumed the Chair.

Councillor Dan Schumann joined the meeting at 5.45pm.

Councillor Every reminded Members of the background relating to grant funding and reiterated that the Senior Leisure Services Officer went through all applications with a fine toothcomb.

It was proposed and seconded that the Officer's recommendation be supported, and when put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That the recommended allocations, as set out below, be agreed:

- Bottisham Sports Centre (Bottisham Village College) - £1,000;
- Littleport Leisure - £6,640.

At this point, Councillor David Ambrose Smith re-entered the room and re-assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

10. THE HIVE: PROGRESS REPORT

In the absence of the Senior Leisure Services Officer, the Director, Commercial, presented a report (reference T37, previously circulated) which updated Members on the initial progress of the new leisure centre, 'The Hive'. Any questions for which she was unable to provide an answer would be passed to the Senior Leisure Services Officer for a response.

The completion of the centre, two weeks ahead of the contracted finish date, was relatively smooth, and it opened to the public on Monday, 14th May. There had been some teething problems in specific areas, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

GLL data indicated that usage over the first two weeks of full opening was predominantly for the pools. There had been some negative feedback regarding the teaching pool, partly because of its size and because of the lack of a graduated entry area. There were also complaints about the absence of leisure elements such as flumes or a sauna. Commentary on social media had tended to focus on perceived problems, but in general the atmosphere had remained positive. Officers would continue to work with GLL to optimise the use and programming of the water space and to identify any areas where there was scope for improvement in the service.

Members noted that the gym had received 2,000 visitors in its first month, and this was ahead of predicted performance. All seemed to be on track. The junior gym would be managed very carefully.

The Director said that the Council's relationship with GLL was very good and working well, not least because GLL listened to Officers and took on board their advice. The aim was to develop comprehensive and coherent programmes in the most popular activities while maintaining the necessary breadth to attract the widest possible cross section of the community. It was not expected that the Council would be directly involved in the programmes, but would actively support GLL and the clubs working together.

Councillor Whelan enquired about the turnover of staff, wondering whether it was 'huge' or stable. The Director replied that she understood it to be stable, but would ask the Senior Leisure Services Officer to contact her.

Councillor Smith commented that his wife had encountered difficulties in trying to take out membership online. She subsequently went to The Hive, where she got the impression that the staff on Reception did not seem to want to deal with applications over the counter. He believed there should be more flexibility and people should be able to sign up at Reception because not everybody had access to a computer or was comfortable using one.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith concurred, adding that some people might never have used a sports centre before or might not be so 'internet savvy', and those who were not so confident should be made welcome.

The Director said she would feed these comments back to the Senior Leisure Services Officer.

The Chairman asked for a quarterly update report to be brought to future Committee meetings and reiterated that he needed to be kept aware of any queries arising. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

11. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS

The Committee received a report (reference T38, previously circulated) which informed Members of the impact to date of the three Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) adopted by the Council.

The Neighbourhood Support Officer reminded Members that Orders were currently in place for the footpath adjacent to Ross Peers Sports Centre in Soham, Angel Drove Car Park, Ely, and at St George's Church, Harley Davidson/War Memorial open space, Parsons Lane Recreation Ground, Littleport.

The PSPO for Soham was introduced in March 2016 and those for Ely and Littleport, in October 2017. Each Order was for the duration of three years and was adopted due to the high levels of anti-social behaviour.

It was noted that the impact of the Orders had been very positive, to the extent that it had only been necessary to issue one Fixed Penalty Notice. This was in October 2017 and had been issued to a single male in the vicinity of St George's Church, as he had been causing a nuisance, harassment and distress to persons in the locality. Officers had had discussions with the local Police Inspector who confirmed that there had been no recording of further incidents in the given areas.

The Neighbourhood Support Officer said the Vice Principal of Soham Village College had found the PSPO to be so effective that he was looking to renew it. When asked by the Chairman about displacement, she replied that she was not aware of any. However, there had been some anti-social driving on the College field in Soham and steps were being taken to address this.

Councillor Hugo recalled that when Members agreed to support the adoption of an Order, it had been suggested that it was a heavy handed measure. However, he believed this report validated the decision to impose the PSPO.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith said there was consistent low level vandalism on the Parsons Lane Recreation Ground and this was causing a degree of concern. The Chairman added that incidents had not been reported to the Police. The Housing & Community Safety Manager interjected to say that this was why Littleport had been chosen for the first Youth Hub and Officers would be going out to interact with young people.

Councillor Hugo said that similar problems were being encountered in Haddenham involving youths on bikes and incidents were fed back to the Parish Council. Councillor Every added that in Ely issues were often picked up via Facebook; they were logged and Ward Members were informed so that a response could be formulated. The Chairman responded by saying that because of the good that was being done, Officers should be encouraged to engage with the Parish Councils and get across the message that the District Council was here to help.

It was resolved;

That the outcomes of the respective PSPOs be noted.

12. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES & ANNUAL REPORTS

The Committee received a report (reference T39, previously circulated) from which Members were asked to receive the Annual Reports from appointed Council representatives for those bodies which fell within the responsibility of the Community Services Committee.

Members were also asked to appoint to the vacancy on the Soham & District Sports Association.

In connection with that vacancy, it was noted that in 2017 Councillor Schumann had expressed an interest in becoming the second representative on the organisation. However, the Democratic Services Officer had heard nothing further regarding confirmation of the appointment and she had since been advised that Councillor Mark Goldsack had become involved with the Soham & District Sports Association in his capacity as a District Councillor. Having subsequently spoken to Councillor Goldsack, he had told her he was content to be formally appointed as the second representative, if the Committee was so minded.

The Chairman emphasised the importance of the Committee making the decision and Councillor Schumann confirmed that he had no objection to Councillor Goldsack taking up the appointment.

It was noted that Councillor Andy Pearson was named as a representative on the Community Safety Partnership and the East Cambs & Fenland Children's Trust. As Councillor Pearson was now living abroad, it was proposed, seconded and agreed that Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith should take his place on both organisations.

The Chairman also drew Members' attention to the comments in the final paragraph of Councillor Griffin Singh's report on the Paradise Centre Management Committee, Ely. He felt that all appointments to outside bodies should be carefully considered and the Director assured him that a full review would be carried out in 2019 at the start of the new Administration. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

- 1) 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 Community Services Committee, be noted;
- 2) That Councillor Mark Goldsack be appointed to the vacancy on the Soham & District Sports Association; and
- 3) That Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith be appointed to replace Councillor Andy Pearson on the Community Safety Partnership and the East Cambs & Fenland Children's Trust.

13. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

The Committee reviewed the Community Services Forward Agenda Plan.

It was noted that the District Wide Tourism Strategy would not be ready for the meeting scheduled for 12th September and so it would come to Committee on 20th November 2018.

An update report on The Hive would come to Committee on a quarterly basis.

In response to a query regarding the feasibility studies for the market towns, the Director said that they would all interlink, but it had yet to be decided which Committee would receive them.

It was resolved;

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

The meeting closed at 6:04pm.