

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on 13th March 2019 at 6.00pm

P R E S E N T

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

OFFICERS

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer

39. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

40. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

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

There were no substitutions.

It was noted that Councillor Schumann would arrive late to the meeting.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Every declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 (Grants to Voluntary Organisations), being Chairman of the Trustees of Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire.

42. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that this was the last meeting of the Community Services Committee and he offered his thanks to Members for serving on the Committee and to Officers for all their hard work.

44. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – END OF YEAR REPORTS & NEW SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS

The Committee received a report, T217, previously circulated, which provided Members with the end of year performance outputs for 2018/19 and the new Service Delivery Plans for Open Spaces, Leisure Services, and Communities & Partnership Services.

The Performance Management Officer said that she would invite each Service Lead to present the information for their service area.

Open Spaces:

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said that with the exception of the development of a website information page, targets had been achieved for 2018/19. The website had not been developed in the last financial year due to capacity problems, but with his office now being fully staffed, it would be focused on in 2019/20.

Referring to the review relating to emergency planning, Councillor Every asked if it would be on the website and whether the Council had a procedure for lock downs in the event of a terrorist type of incident. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said that the Government's 'Run, Hide and Tell' guidance would be put into practice. Extra procedures had been introduced in the Post Room and all incoming post now went through an x-ray scanner.

Speaking of the new Service Delivery Plan, the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager said the Service would maintain existing contracts and aim to build on them in the right way.

The Chairman asked him if he foresaw any big hurdles or worries and the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager replied that getting quality staff was a concern. He was working with Highfield Ely Academy to try to attract young people and get them involved in the industry. The Director Commercial commented that it was not just a case of recruiting staff but also retaining them. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager agreed, adding that while his Service's last apprentice had been retained, there was a need to put in place a proper

apprenticeship scheme and also work with colleges to find suitable candidates. Councillor Every said that now was the time of year to start a recruitment drive and it should be launched to all the schools in the area.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager and his team for a good successful year.

Leisure Services:

The Senior Leisure Services Officer commenced by speaking of the modernisation of the District's facilities. Working on a collaborative basis, reasonably good progress had been made in some areas such as Littleport and Ellesmere. Renewal of the hockey pitch surface had been completed at the Ely Hockey Club and the roof works at Burwell had been completed. However, the Service Level Agreement with the Ross Peers Sports Centre was a slow work in progress and the development of a Business Plan was required.

The work of the Physical Activity Coordinator was starting to have a real impact and new programmes such as walking groups, running, and 'Back to Swimming' were being developed. There was a range of different programmes being delivered in collaboration with The Hive and the emphasis was on accessibility, with many being free.

There were also some specialist programmes, with one at Ely College being replicated at The Hive and piloted with the youth club at Littleport.

The Hive's starting year had been good and although there had been some teething troubles, the facility was in a good state. The Senior Leisure Services Officer said he had recently had a walk through the building and usage had increased.

Councillor Schumann joined the meeting at 6.15pm.

The Chairman remarked that the Littleport centre was now a different place compared to three years ago. He thanked the Senior Leisure Services Officer for all his hard work and asked that his thanks also be passed to the Physical Activity Coordinator.

Communities & Partnerships:

The Communities & Partnerships Manager took Members through the end of year report for 2018/19, saying it had been another successful year. Outcomes included the installation of a new picnic and play area, toilet provision during the summer months, ongoing consultation with site users, Natural England Country Park accreditation for Ely Country Park and Green Flag accreditation for both Ely Country Park and Jubilee Gardens. With regard to Ely Riverside, 100% of enforcement timescales and procedures were adhered to, with 35 Mooring Charge Notices having been issued and processed. The Draft Community Engagement Strategy had been presented to Committee and approved in January 2019.

Speaking next of the new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20, the Communities & Partnerships Manager reminded Members that this would be the final year of the current Ely Country Park Improvement Plan. Consultation with site users will continue to inform any potential future priorities and further accreditation applications will be made, and steps would also be taken to identify external funding opportunities for the Park. In connection with Ely Riverside, a new commercial operator would be in place during 2019.

Councillor Smith said that people kept raising the issue of toilet provision in the Park. At present it was in place during the summer months and he asked if it would be possible to keep it there for longer. The Communities & Partnerships Manager replied that the contract was in place and would be extended for a longer period during the summer. Consultation would be carried out to establish the seasonality of the toilets, a review conducted and based on the findings, a recommendation would be made.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith said she had found the Parish Conference to be very valuable because it was useful to learn about the experiences of other Parish Councils; the format was enjoyable.

The Chairman thanked the Communities & Partnerships Manager and Performance Management Officer for their work on the end of year report and new Service Plan. There being no further questions or comments,

It was resolved:

To approve the end of year performance outputs and the new service delivery plans for the following services:

- Open spaces;
- Leisure Services;
- Communities and Partnerships.

45. DRAFT EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE TOURISM STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

The Communities & Partnerships Manager presented a report, reference T218, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note and approve the Draft East Cambridgeshire Tourism & Action Plan.

The aims and objectives of the Strategy were set out in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the submitted report, and Appendix 1 contained the Strategy document.

Members noted that research had been carried out to identify key information for the planning and development of the Tourism Strategy, including the profiles of current visitors, gaps in the existing visitor base and the components of the existing visitor product. 800 visitors were surveyed at key attractions across the District and the immediate surrounding area.

The research findings included the following:

- There were 30 visitor attractions in East Cambridgeshire;

- There were 100 public houses, bars and eateries in the District;
- 1% of visitors were part of a coach or minibus party;
- The highest spending visitors were those that travelled the furthest to get here;
- There was no predominantly recognised name for the East Cambridgeshire area.

The recommendations arising from the findings of the research had been carefully considered so as to add value to existing visitor provision and to provide an effective joined up approach for the benefit of the entire District. A new tourism website for the whole of East Cambridgeshire would be developed and launched; the feasibility of developing a District-wide brand would be explored, and there would be engagement with other organisations and neighbouring areas to explore opportunities to work collaboratively to achieve a stronger visitor economy.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager said that the recommendations of the Strategy were shared with a range of stakeholders including attractions and parish councils. In general, the attractions supported implementation and some of the parish councils advised that they had no comments. It was noted that of the comments received, approximately 80% of them could be addressed through the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Strategy.

The Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 5.2 of the report, which set out the financial implications of implementing the initial recommendations. The underspend from 2018/19 would be carried forward to 2019/20 and costs could be met from the existing budget allocation. Ongoing resources would be assessed once the new website had been launched.

The Chairman commented that he was very pleased to see how much emphasis had been placed on collaborative working.

Councillor Schumann acknowledged that the website would be a big step forward, but he questioned how it would proceed once it was up and running. The Communities & Partnerships Manager said that at this stage it would be a platform to address findings and areas of focus that had been identified; it would signpost and add value to existing services.

The Director Commercial added that the budget allocation would be £20,000 per annum and Members should be mindful that there were other bodies promoting tourism. Officers would concentrate on the development of the website and then reflect after the first year. The website would be kept under review and a report would be brought back to Committee.

Councillor Schumann replied that the content of the Strategy and the background work was excellent, but he felt the Strategy needed a bit more to it; the Council should show some strategic leadership and form a tourism forum. Members had been told for a long time that the wait for a Tourism Strategy was because of an emerging Market Town Centres Forum. He was not seeing any links and was keen that they were made. The Director Commercial assured him

that this would be kept under review, but she first wanted to test the effectiveness of the website.

Councillor Every congratulated the Communities & Partnerships Manager on what she considered to be a 'fantastic' piece of work. Ely Council Perspective would be happy to collaborate and she agreed that the website should be monitored so that the momentum would not be lost. Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith said there should be a commitment to keeping the website looking fresh as it could be valuable to the local economy.

It was resolved:

- 1) To approve the Draft East Cambridgeshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan;
- 2) That a process be put in place to monitor the tourism website, with a report to be brought back to Committee after the first year.

46. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Committee considered a report, S219, previously circulated, from which Members were asked to note the performance and emerging issues identified by three of the voluntary organisations funded by East Cambridgeshire District Council, and to agree their funding allocations for 2019/20.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager drew Members' attention to paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3 of the report, which set out key figures in respect of Citizens Advice Newmarket, Citizens Advice Rural Cambs, and Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire.

It was noted that 188 East Cambridgeshire residents were assisted by Citizens Advice, Newmarket. 223 issues were dealt with, the most frequent being debt and benefits. The main communities of concern were Burwell, Cheveley, Soham South and Fordham, and 125 of the 188 unique clients supported were from these areas. The service had adopted a 'quick entry' model whereby information and signposting was provided without taking any monitoring information. More people were using the website which freed up resources for those who needed more extensive support with face to face assistance.

The Citizens Advice Rural Cambs service assisted 982 East Cambs residents; 3,710 issues were dealt with, the most common being debt, benefits and tax credits, and relationships and families. A specialist debt advisor (funded by the Money Advice Service) was employed to support clients with unmanageable debt to help prevent homelessness or non-payment of priority bills. The service acted as a registered agent for the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme and combined advice services for clients before issuing vouchers for household items and supermarket vouchers. The communities that received the most support were Soham South, Ely North and Burwell.

VCAEC had provided training for 28 people on issues including safeguarding adults and child protection and had placed 33 volunteers into local projects and businesses. It was noted that 52 enquiries from voluntary and community groups were dealt with; enquiries included General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and setting up a new group and funding. The Social Car Scheme and Helping Hands service remained in great demand with both services supporting the work of the East Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Partnership.

Turning next to the emerging issues, the Communities & Partnerships Manager said that Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire had seen an increase in issues relating to Universal Credit and this trend was expected to continue.

The Newmarket service had some anticipated concerns relating to the roll out of the benefit and that there could be an increase in demand for assistance. Members noted that Citizens Advice Newmarket also had concerns relating to Brexit that might result in an increased demand for their services.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager reminded the Committee that Citizens Advice Newmarket would merge with Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau with effect from 1st April 2019. The organisations did not foresee any negative impacts on East Cambs clients and it was envisaged that service delivery might improve for them by having access to specialist advisors currently based at Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau.

VCAEC had recognised that attendance at local events was an effective way of engaging with community groups and potential volunteers and therefore efforts would be focused in this way moving forward. As a member of the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership's Delivery Group, VCAEC had signed up as a partner of the 'Eyes and Ears' scheme and would be training their staff and volunteers in the referral process.

Members were requested to maintain the same level of funding for 2019/20 as was awarded in 2018/19 and noted that this could be funded from existing resources in the Communities & Partnerships budget.

It was resolved:

- i) To note the latest performance information relating to Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire and the Citizens Advice organisations;
- ii) To note the emerging issues identified by the voluntary organisations;
- iii) To approve the following grant contributions for the 2019/20 Service Level Agreements:
 - Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire - £47,346.80;
 - Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau - £23,166.03;
 - VCAEC - £19,928.

47. THE HIVE: PROGRESS REPORT

The Senior Leisure Services Officer presented a report which provided Members with an update on the progress of The Hive, saying that much of the content had already been covered in the earlier agenda item on Performance Management.

Total visits in January had seen a rise of about 10% from November and about half of the increase was for fitness attendances

The operation of the building was steadily consolidating and the issues raised had been addressed. The working relationship between the Council and GLL remained good.

As had been previously mentioned, programme development continued. Clubs were coming into the centre to run sessions; Walking Football would be introduced shortly by GLL in collaboration with the Norwich City Regional Development team and a 'Leisure Club' session (with a social element) aimed at older people who might not have been active for some time, was also to be introduced. The intention was to continue piloting initiatives and developing the programme with a view to broadening the participation base.

The Chairman offered his congratulations to the Senior Leisure Services Officer, saying it was good that The Hive seemed to be becoming more of a community. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.59pm.