



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL
ASSETS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

13 FEBRUARY 2017 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Human, Chairman; Councillors Bucknor, Lay, Mrs MacRae, Oliver, Miss Oliver and Tibbs.

Apologies: Councillors Hill and Tierney.

In attendance: Mr M South, Assets Manager. Councillor Miss Hoy attended as an observer.

The minutes of the meeting of the Assets Management Committee held on 1 November 2016 were confirmed and signed.

A11/16 Public Participation – People and Animals UK C.I.C

Members received a presentation from Miss K Bristow, a Director of People and Animals UK.

Miss Bristow reminded members that People and Animals UK is a C.I.C. that aims to provide animal assisted therapeutic interventions, activities, education and skills development opportunities for children, young people and adults to support and enhance the physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals and the wider community, i.e. to increase community resilience.

Miss Bristow informed the committee that since her presentation to the Town Council in March 2015 (minute 145/14 refers) People and Animals UK had made significant progress, with many programmes now established across community centres, schools, children's homes and public outdoor areas. The C.I.C has worked in collaboration across the voluntary and statutory sector, working within the community to understand the needs of residents, whilst monitoring the impact of the programmes as a cost-effective and alternative means of support. Miss Bristow detailed the core outcomes.

Miss Bristow showed a short video film of some of People and Animals UK's local activities.

Careful evaluation of its work has enabled People and Animals UK to identify further therapeutic activities to benefit the people of Wisbech. As a result of adding appropriate expertise to the People and Animals team, it is now possible to offer therapeutic horticulture and land-based activities, working with the community to develop green spaces.

Miss Bristow informed the committee that People and Animals UK is now ready to progress to sourcing an accessible venue - a 'small farm' type base - which would provide the opportunity to expand the services that could be offered. This would allow People and Animals UK to provide individuals of all ages and abilities with a non-threatening environment where they could meet other like-minded people who are interested in animals and horticulture, re-engage with their community, access other opportunities via signposting to external services linked to the project, supporting the improved health, well-being, community cohesion, individual life skill development, peer support, discovering hidden talents, enriching their lives forever.

The barrier that is currently being faced by People and Animals UK is in sourcing a suitable plot of land in a location which the community would be able to access effectively. People and Animals UK would, therefore, like to explore the possibility of leasing from Wisbech Town Council any underused



allotment land; a minimum of 5 acres, with the potential access to mains services, would be required.

Miss Bristow commented that complementing the Wisbech 2020 Vision and Dementia Friends, this community farm, as a 'gateway', would provide a hugely valuable resource, that maintains cost-effectively a green space, whilst providing a range of therapeutic services for all ages and abilities, supporting community cohesion and resilience, health and wellbeing, engaging 'hard to reach' groups, thus potentially reducing the need for people to access statutory services long-term. People and Animals would expect to pay to the council to an appropriate lease fee once established.

Miss Bristow responded to members' questions.

Members decided that the content of the presentation by Miss Bristow be noted and that it be taken into account when discussing, at minute A15/16, the request to lease from Wisbech Town Council any underused allotment land for the purpose of establishing a community farm.

A12/16 Wisbech Town Hall

Further to minute A7/16, the Clerk reported to members on various matters relating to Wisbech Town Hall, as follows:

Fire safety inspection

As was reported to the last meeting of Wisbech Town Council by Councillor Oliver (minute 127/16 refers), Wisbech Town Hall was subject to an inspection by the local Fire Protection Officer (of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service) in mid-December 2016.

The Fire Protection Officer is satisfied that Wisbech Town Council is taking all appropriate measures – through the installation of smoke detection equipment, the possession of fire extinguishers, the installation of a fire alarm (which is tested at appropriate intervals), and having a fire evacuation procedure (which includes having a "safe room") – to protect the building, its contents and those persons who would be occupying the building as employees, members of the council or as visitors.

The Fire Protection Officer made two recommendations as a result of the inspection; these are for the council to:

1. review the current fire safety risk assessment, to ensure that it remains "fit for purpose"
2. arrange the delivery of "refresher" fire safety training for staff.

With regard to 2, above, the Clerk informed members that he had booked places for two members of Wisbech Town Council staff on the next Fire Safety for Businesses seminar which is scheduled to take place in the town (at Wisbech Fire Station on 28 March 2017). Following attendance at that seminar, the Clerk will be able, having received learning in relation to the council's obligations under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, to review effectively the council's fire safety risk assessment (to address recommendation 1 above).

Although not mentioned as a recommendation within the letter from the Fire Protection Officer, that officer had suggested to the Clerk that it would be prudent to undertake a fire drill on an occasion when persons other than employees only would be in the building. Consequently, the Clerk proposes to arrange a fire drill for an appropriate occasion.

Members decided that the outcome of the inspection by the Fire Protection Officer be noted and that the actions proposed to address the recommendations of that officer be endorsed.



Disability access

The Clerk reminded members that the council's Policy and Resources Committee had decided, at minute R9/16, that a disability access survey of Wisbech Town Hall be undertaken, following which the council would consider if any works would be required to ensure that the council is able to meet both its legal obligations and the needs of its service-users.

At minute R12/16 the Clerk had informed the Policy and Resources Committee that he was seeking to identify a person/company with the relevant expertise to undertake a disability access survey of Wisbech Town Hall and that, once undertaken, the results of that survey would be made known to the members of Wisbech Town Council. The council would then need to consider what action to take, if any were needed, in that regard. Members would also need to consider any associated funding requirements.

A disability access survey of Wisbech Town Hall was undertaken on 1 February 2017 by the Compliance Team Manager within the Property Services Team at Cambridgeshire County Council. This officer had been identified as being suitably qualified and experienced to undertake this survey work by one of the Directors at the County Council, following an approach to that Director by Councillor Lay.

The County Council Officer's report reads:

"I agree you have a particular challenge in a Grade II listed building with only one entrance and exit in managing the requirement of the Equality Act 2010.

My view is that at the moment you have taken reasonable steps to ensure access to your Council Chamber and that you demonstrated flexibility in a willingness to moving meetings to other sites to ensure public access if the current arrangements at the Town Hall would not be adequate.

I note you have an agreement with the Fire Service in relation to a possible evacuation.

My only concern, as discussed, is the toilets; both Male and Female do not meet the requirements on a number of fronts, size and accessibility. I note that this has not caused any issues so far and expanding them is impossible, however I do need to advise you that you could be at risk of a challenge if a member, staff or member of the public was prevented from using them based on their mobility".

Members decided that the report in relation to the outcome of the disability access survey be noted.

Repairs and maintenance

The Clerk reminded members that Wisbech Town Council had - having regard for the comments made by this committee at minute A/16 regarding the need for the council to take seriously its responsibilities as the custodian of a historic building - allocated within its budget for the financial year 2017/18 the sum of £10,000 for the purpose of starting to address repair and maintenance issues in relation to the Town Hall.

Councillor Human reminded members of the comments that he had made at the last meeting of this committee regarding the need to undertake works to the heating system at the Town Hall, to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. He informed members that the frequency of its operational failure is increasing and he suggested that the most effective solution would be to replace the current system.



Members decided that the current situation be noted and that quotations for the provision and installation of a new heating system at Wisbech Town Hall be sought.

Security

Further to minute A7/16, the Clerk updated sought members' further thoughts in terms of improving security of staff at the Town Hall and informed them of possible minor works to the building (creating a "counter" on the ground floor and upgrading the door entry system) to that end.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the proposed works suggested by the Clerk be pursued by council officers.

A13/16 Wisbech Market Place

Members considered the operational issues in relation to the use of the Market Place (both as a community space and a trading area).

General performance and activity 2016/17

The Clerk informed members of the performance of the trading activities and operational aspects of Wisbech Market Place in the financial year 2016/17 to date.

Officers of the council continue to operate incentive schemes to encourage new, long-term traders, allowing them lower rent levels initially but increasing them gradually to full rent once it is clear that they will continue to trade.

The number of traders at Wisbech Market Place has remained fairly constant during the financial year 2016/17 to date. However, a number of new traders had begun trading at Wisbech Market in recent weeks and discussions are underway with other potential new traders. The council's Assets Manager provided further details to members in terms of the number of new traders and their goods; he commented that a number of enquiries from potential traders are being received and that the diversity of the goods being sold at Wisbech Market is increasing.

Although Thursday, Friday and Saturday remain the busiest days currently, increases in trade are being seen on other days. The Clerk reminded members of the decision at minute A4/16 that the Sunday Market, which had operated on a trial basis for one year, would become a permanent arrangement. This means that Wisbech Market has become a seven days per week operation. Since closure, in late December 2016, of the out-of-town, privately-operated Sunday market, the level of trading at the Wisbech Central Sunday Market has increased considerably; it is anticipated that this trend will continue. The council's Assets Manager expressed the opinion that it would be beneficial to operation of the Sunday Market if the road could be closed to traffic on that day of the week; the situation will be monitored by the council's Assets Manager.

The level of income generated by the market has decreased; the income received in the period 1 October to 31 December 2016 was £15,939.82, which is at a lower level than for the same period in 2015 (at £16,641.02). The situation is being monitored by officers.

The level of expenditure on market operations (rates, maintenance and utilities) during the period 1 October to 31 December 2016 was £11,779.31, which shows a decrease over the same period in 2015 (at £18,084.56).

The council's Assets Manager suggested that the committee may wish to consider, as a means of reducing the costs of operating the Wisbech Market (as opposed to thinking about increasing rents), ceasing to collect and disposing of traders' waste. He made the point that the majority of the waste



is generated by around 6.5% of the total number of traders on Wisbech Market Place; currently, all traders are contributing, through the rents paid to the council, towards the cost of the waste collection and disposal service – cessation of this service would be a more equitable arrangement than possibly increasing the rents for all traders.

Members decided

- (1) that the current situation regarding markets performance and activity be noted;
- (2) to agree in principle to ceasing the collection and disposal of trade waste from Wisbech Market, subject to officers reporting back to this committee on the financial and other implications of such a course of action.

Community events and festivals

The Clerk mentioned that Wisbech Market Place continues to be used as the location for a number of community events and festivals.

Since the last meeting of this committee the Market Place was used as the location for the Christmas Lights Switch-on event (which took place on Sunday 27 November 2016) and the Wisbech Christmas Fayre 2016 (held on 11 December 2016).

In addition, were made by council officers for last year's Halloween Spooktacular event (which took place on 29 October) to "spill out" from the Horsefair Shopping Centre into the Market Place.

All of the events mentioned above had been extremely successful.

The Clerk reminded members of the programme of events – the majority of which would take place on the Market Place – agreed by the council's Community Events and Festivals Committee for 2017 (minute C8/16 refers).

Both the Clerk and the council's Assets Manager made the point that, given the increasing success of the council's festivals and events and the permanency and increasing success of the Wisbech Central Sunday Market, it would be necessary to plan carefully any events which utilise the Market Place as a venue to enable the Wisbech Central Sunday Market to operate, with the odd exception, on those days. These events attract high levels of attendance by members of the public and, consequently, provide the opportunity for the council's regular market traders to achieve an increase in their income. This trading also adds to the range of activities available to the attendees at events held in the town centre.

The Clerk mentioned that officers continue to look for other activities which could take place on Wisbech Market Place and would welcome any ideas from members in that regard.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that they would inform officers of any ideas they may have in terms of increasing/improving the use of the Market Place for community events.

Market Place enhancements

The Clerk reminded members of the update that he had provided at the last meeting of this committee (on 1 November 2016) on the position with regard to the preparation of design concepts for enhancement of Wisbech Market Place (minute A8/16 refers) and that members had decided, having considered the content of the scoping study and the comments which had been received by the Clerk from two members of the council, that



- the situation at that time and the content of the scoping study be noted;
- a Task and Finish Group be established (to include not only town councillors but also appropriate representatives of the local community) to consider the content of the scoping study and feasibility of its implementation and to organise a public consultation exercise.

The Clerk informed members that, for various reasons, no progress regarding this project has been made since the last meeting of this committee and he requested from members a “steer” to council officers with regard to a terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group and its membership, as well as an indicative timescale for the project.

The Chairman mentioned his recollection that all of the members who had attended the last meeting of this committee (i.e. Councillors Bucknor, Oliver, Miss Oliver, Tibbs, Tierney and he) had indicated that they wish to be members of the Task and Finish Group. He made the suggestion, with which there was concurrence by the other members of the committee that other members of the group should be:

- the Clerk to the Council
- the council's Assets Manager
- one representative of the market traders
- one member of the Chamber of Commerce
- one member of the Wisbech Society
- one representative of Wisbech in Bloom
- one member of the public (the possible method of selection being via a focus group).

Members decided that membership of the Task and Finish Group be as set out above and that this project be progressed without delay.

Development plan for Wisbech Market

The Clerk reminded members that this committee had decided at minute A4/16 that it would work on the production of a formal development plan for Wisbech Market following conclusion of the consultancy work relating to enhancement of the Market Place and that it had decided at minute A8/16 that this matter continue to progressed in accordance with minute A4/16.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

A14/16 Public toilets

Further to minute A9/16, the Clerk reminded members of the repair works required to one window and one door (and its frame) at the toilets in Exchange Square, Wisbech and informed them of the advice that he had been given by Fenland District Council's Conservation Officer as to appropriate methods of repair or replacement of the window and door (and its frame); in summary, the repair or replacement would need to be on a like-for-like basis Both in terms of appearance and materials. The council's Assets Manager is in the process of obtaining quotations for this work.

The council's Assets Manager sought members' views regarding two operational issues in relation to the two sets of public toilets operated by Wisbech Town Council:

- (1) a suggestion that the council installs feminine hygiene units in both sets of its ladies' toilets (and the disabled toilets); the cost of the service, on the basis of it being serviced by a contractor every four weeks, would be around £500 per annum



- (2) a suggestion that the council installs receptacles for hazardous sharps (needles) in both sets of its ladies and gents toilets; the cost of the service, on the basis of it being serviced by a contractor on a quarterly basis, would be around £180 per annum.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the council would introduce both of the measures at (1) and (2) above.

A15/16 Allotments

The Clerk reminded members of the council's declared ambition to enhance and develop the council's allotments and invited the Assets Manager to explain to members any operational issues in relation to the council's allotments sites and the development works which had been carried out to date and are planned for the future.

The council's Assets Manager reminded members that there are currently no proposals for development of the sites at Cox's Lane and Mile Tree Lane; they would, however, receive maintenance as and when required. The development works to date have focussed upon the sites at Waterlees Road and Dowgate Road and he explained to members the works which are currently taking place, and are almost complete, at the Waterlees Road site in relation to improved access arrangements.

The council's Assets Manager referred to members the requests from two potential allotment tenants; one seeking to keep bees (in seven hives) and the other wishing to site a small storage container (10 feet by 8 feet in size), instead of a traditional shed, on an allotment plot.

Members considered, having regard for the presentation made by Miss K Bristow at minute A11/16, a request from People and Animals UK CIC to lease from Wisbech Town Council any underused allotment land, of a minimum of 5 acres in size, for the purpose of developing a 'small farm' type of base which would provide the opportunity for People and Animals UK to expand the range of therapeutic services that it offers to the local community.

Councillor Oliver reminded members that the council had agreed to make available the allotments site (of approximately 17 acres in size) at Lynn Road for the Fenland and West Norfolk Aviation Museum and the Vivian Fire Engine Trust and he expressed the opinion that this site is of sufficient size to be able to accommodate the People and Animals UK proposal also.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation with regard to allotments management and development be noted;
- (2) the requests from potential allotment tenants (relating to the keeping of bees and installation of a storage container on plots) be approved;
- (3) the request from People and Animals UK CIC, to lease allotment land from Wisbech Town Council, be approved and that the Clerk would discuss with the CIC the associated practicalities and legalities associated with such an arrangement.

A16/16 Future of the Cleansing Contracts

Further to minute A8/16, the Clerk reported that the council is now in possession of all of the quotations anticipated for the council's Cleansing Contracts and he provided members with a summary of the quotations received as a result of the tendering process.



The Clerk reminded members that it had been agreed that, as well as obtaining quotations for this work, the council would seek to establish, following the outcome of the tendering process, the feasibility of employing staffing and purchasing equipment (instead of using the services of a contractor) for this work.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that budget allocation for this work in 2017/18 is the same as for 2016/17; that is:

- Cleansing of Market Place: £24,000.00
- Cleansing of 2 sets of toilets: £24,000.00
- Cleaning of Town Hall: £1,500.00.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the Clerk would contact each of the contractors to ascertain from them the impact upon their respective quotations if the council were to delete from the contract the daily collection and disposal of trade waste from the Market Place (minute A13/16 refers) and report back to this committee thereon.

(Members resolved to exclude the public for the part of this item of business which related to the potential land sale on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended))

Meeting finished at 9.15 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....