

Minutes of Meeting on 29th February 2024
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Mr P Beard (Chairman), Mr R Fairweather, Cllr Adam Gladwin, Cllr M Hare, Mrs C Brock, Mrs J Grotier (item 24/016 onwards), Mrs L Scott, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs J Triscott, Cllr Martine Ward, Mrs R Valentine and Mr S Wright.

Also present: Mrs Baxter (clerk).

Not present: Mr S Higgins.

24/011 Chairman's welcome.

Mr Beard welcomed everyone.

24/012 Apologies of Absence.

Mr S Higgins sent his apologies.

24/013 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests.

None.

24/014 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 8th February 2024.

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 8th February as true and accurate with the following two amendments: To change the "School Road" reference in item 24/006 paragraph 6 to "Church Road". To change the present/absent lists to show that Mr S Wright was present, not absent.

Proposed: Mr Beard, Seconded: Mr Fairweather, all in favour.

24/015 Public Speaking

None.

Mrs Grotier arrived.

24/016 A report on any updates since the last Committee meeting to include:

i) *Any updates on actions from the meeting with TDC's director of planning.*

TDC is still to arrange a meeting with Go Homes. This is to talk about the missing SUDS connections and completing the open space. TDC has started the enforcement process as the drainage scheme hasn't been completed according to the plan.

ii) *The status of the Charity Field development.*

No updates. It was discussed that when it's paid the Charity Field contribution will come to the Parish Council. The council will need to manage that contribution to earn the best interest, and will need to apply for an interest bearing account. This will need to go onto a future council meeting agenda. There is already a £50k contribution being held in the council's account for new community centre expenses.

The committee reviewed the updated funding spreadsheet. It was discussed that the Lanswood and other sums have been sitting in TDC's accounts for a while. We have asked TDC about interest on s106 sums held on our behalf. Cllr Gladwin said that councils are legally required to hold s106 monies in interest bearing accounts and that the interest has to be paid on the project.

It was asked about monies previously raised for the New Community Centre. There is an account with about 100k for the internal furnishings. Mr Fairweather is looking at a new account for the savings. It was thought that EMCHAT had previously invested sums in bonds, the clerk will check.

It was asked whether the current community centre value could go towards the new community centre. It was replied that it hasn't decided. The council also looked into an option of affordable homes on the current site as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. There is the issue that we need to keep the current centre until the new centre is ready to use. There may be

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the option of a bridging loan or a contract with a developer.

Mr Fairweather brought up that Mr Hills (Developer) would like to talk to the council about a potential contribution. Cllr Gladwin will call him.

- iii) *The status of the Church Road development and the payment of the s106 contribution for the building of the community centre.*

We have not heard from TDC that the sum has been transferred. TDC has been asked whether we will be paid interest due to the delay in payment and we are awaiting a reply. The funds will go into TDC's accounts and they will disburse it to us on receipt of invoices.

24/017 New Community Centre/car park land and Open Space land

Any update on the land transfers, drainage issues or boundary issues.

TDC will also discuss the boundary with Go Homes when they meet. We may need to get someone to officially check the boundary and confirm where there are any incursions. There is no update from the solicitor. Mr Beard offered to have an informal chat with the residents.

24/018 Exclusion of press and public for private and confidential matters under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2) due to the consideration of tenders for a contract not to be decided until a later date, and therefore commercially sensitive.

No public present.

24/019 Planning Application for New Community Centre

To consider quotes received for a lead architect to work with us to complete RIBA stages 1-3 for the project to submit a reserved matters application further to the outline application 14/01728/OUT which was allowed under appeal reference 16/00035/REFUSE.

Four quotes were received which were circulated with a summary. It was difficult to compare quotes as they weren't equitable.

Mr Fairweather asked why all the quotes state a new planning application when what we are doing is a reserved matters application on the approved outline. The tender document was checked and it did say it was for reserved matters. The clerk will query.

Details of the quotes were discussed; they aren't all including the same works and some seem to be including more than the stages 1-3 requested. The prices therefore varied a lot. The tender was done as Stage 1-3 to give us different options once the planning has been approved. We'll need to get a topographical survey.

It was raised that when we met builders a year ago they did say they could also do the work from Stage 1 and get the planning permission. Would getting an architect to do Stages 1-3 then result in our future builder having to do the same work? It was responded that we need the plans to be able to go to the builders with the tender so that we get comparable quotes back, and not different designs that don't already have planning permission. This way we are in control and have the independent architect before the builders get involved. It was felt by some that not getting a builder to do the whole process would waste time and money. Some felt that it's not necessarily a waste of money to use an architect, it's just that their costs may be more transparent than in a builder's quote.

We'd still have the option to do a design and build if an architect does the planning and it was discussed that we'll need an independent professional to project manage.

We met three of the four architects when we previously went to tender and all could do a good job. They all have relevant experience, they have all done community centres. It was discussed that we should then go with the best value. This was difficult to work out between the various quotes.

It was discussed that more clarification is needed around stage 1 costs, consultants' costs, costs that we aren't sure are included and in what format files are needed.

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The costs for the architect will come from the £50k funding we have already received. Two suggestions were put forward, (a) to further investigate the quotes so that they can be compared more easily and then recommend to the council that they choose the best value, or (b) to go back and speak to the builders we previously spoke to about doing the planning application.

The concern was raised that if we go to the builders we won't be able to get a quote that will hold until they start building because of the time required for the planning application. Another concern was raised that going with an architect would take more time overall.

The deed of variation states that the reserved matters approval is required before it triggers the 3 months for Go Homes to pay. The clerk checked with TDC and the expired permission doesn't count. We therefore need to get the reserved matters approved as soon as possible. There were concerns over getting the planning too early and the time limit on that passing. However as long as we have the land within the three years we can dig a trench and meet the time requirement to start works.

The architects' quotes are at a level (below £25,000) where we can seek 3 quotes and make a decision next week. For the procurement process for the building of the community centre it's at a higher level of legal requirements in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and we'll need to use some professional help with the tender process, as it will involve the use of Contracts Finder and the "Find a tender" website.

It was proposed that we ask the questions to get further details so that the council can make a decision on an architect based upon the best value at its meeting next week. After several votes there was no definite outcome as the vote had the same for (5) and against (5). The remainder abstained. It was decided that it was a split decision with no definite recommendation for either suggestion (a) or (b).

24/020 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only.
None.

24/021 Date of next committee meeting
11th April 2024.

The meeting closed at 9.31pm.

Minuted by Mrs A Baxter

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