

**Minutes of Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2025**  
**Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee**  
**Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET**

**Present:** Mr P Beard (Chairman), Mrs C Brock, Cllr A Gladwin, Mrs J Grotier, Cllr M Hare and Cllr M Ward.

**Also Present:** Mrs A Baxter (clerk) and 3 members of public.

**Not present:** Mr R Fairweather, Cllr L Richfield, Mrs L Scott, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs J Triscott, Mrs R Valentine and Mr S Wright.

**24/087 Chairman's welcome.**

Mr Beard wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed them to the meeting.

**24/088 Apologies of Absence**

Apologies were received from Mr R Fairweather, Cllr L Richfield, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs J Triscott, Mrs R Valentine and Mr S Wright.

**24/089 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests**

None.

**24/090 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024.**

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 as true and accurate. Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Cllr Hare, all in favour.

**24/091 Public Speaking**

None.

**24/092 Updates**

*i) Go Homes contribution.*

The good news is that the £400k contribution has been received into the Parish Council's account.

*ii) Land transfer and other updates from our solicitor.*

Cllr Gladwin and Mrs Baxter met with our solicitor on 19<sup>th</sup> December. It was a long meeting with lots of information discussed.

We went through the two TP1 forms (transfer documents) in detail and there were a few changes that need to be made before signing. The plan shows a knee high fence between the open space land and community centre land which we maintain. There is no fence here so needs to be removed.

Go Homes' solicitor did not want to transfer the contested land (where there are boundary incursions) and so the plan is currently showing the land without those incursions. This was due to potential issues. As the council had resolved to take the land with incursions our solicitor tried to call Go Homes during our meeting to see if they would agree to change it, and left a message. Our solicitor suggested a clause in the document or an e-mail to say that we won't hold Go Homes liable and that we take responsibility for the land.

If Go Homes don't agree to transfer the contested land then once the holding company closes down the land will revert to the crown. It may then be transferred in a number of years through adverse possession. This would need to go back to the council for a decision.

The committee viewed the contested areas on the plan. One issue for the contested land is that the water runs down towards it and if we need to put in any additional drainage that area would be ideal. It's also the principle of it.

We looked at the current and historical land registry boundaries with our solicitor and it seemed clear that incursions have happened.

Cllr Gladwin has been checking the land weekly and the drainage is getting better and it has a good covering of grass.

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The current community centre is not registered with land registry. This could be an issue if we use it as collateral for funding. Our solicitor suggested that we get it registered and this is something that Ellisons can do.

We were advised that if we get grants for the new community centre, for example from lottery funding, then the grant is treated as a loan. The funder takes a charge on the land, and if you need more than one source of funding then it has to be decided who has priority. The lottery may be more lenient as we are a Parish Council. There are legal costs to getting the grants as the funders will go to our solicitor for checks on the land.

We will need to document milestones for the construction, to pass onto the funders.

The last time we spoke to funders we needed to wait until we had the land, the contributions and a cost for the build. Once we have those we will need to move quickly to get the additional funding we'll need.

iii) *Any others?*

Cllr Gladwin and Mrs Baxter met with a quantity surveyor and our architect at the start of December. We will need a QS no matter the type of contract we go for, as they will visit the build regularly to check and ensure accuracy of the work done and materials used.

The QS showed us an example of a tender document which was like a thick book.

We were told it's a difficult time for builders which means there are people chasing the trade.

We might get a lot of tenderers, but some are putting in low offers from the other side of the country, and may be using low quality materials. We need to ensure our specification is very detailed to get the quality we need.

It was asked if there are standards that the builders have to meet. There are the standards that have to be met in the building regulations. But if we want specific standards for quality of materials we will need to include those.

It was raised that we would prefer builders with a proven track record of similar projects. Any criteria we have will need to go into the tender documents.

There are still elements of the build to be decided, such as the heating system and roof.

There will need to be steelwork for the size of the hall. We need a structural engineer and a mechanical and electrical engineer to do the heating and structure so that those details are in the tender document.

It was asked about the sustainability. This will need to be balanced against the cost and the longevity. We'll do as much as we can and look at sustainability grants. We could look at this for the solar panels as a separate project.

There are companies that do deals for EV car charging. We need the infrastructure there to support future sustainability.

Mr Beard spoke about tenders which allow for alternative solutions which are better for sustainability.

Procurement guidelines are changing in February so we need to check what we can do and how that impacts us.

Mr Beard has experience of government tenders and spoke about shortlisting stages. He will ask for information from within his company.

Cllr Hare asked if there would need to be pre-vetting on the building companies. Mr Beard said that some organisations will have a framework which has already done this, but as we don't we'll need to check ourselves.

We need a costing to know how much additional funding we need. In the original quote the QS gave to our architect there was an amount for a cost estimate based upon the planning application. The council has asked the QS to do this. We don't know at this stage if we will be able to use it to start the grant applications.

The estimate is due early in the new year.

If we wait until we have a winning bid for the work to apply for the additional funding it could put the project back.

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The clerk is going to ask TDC about how it works with the lottery fund, and also speak to another funder she has found to see if she can get a general idea of what's needed for the process and how much they might potentially give.

Mr Beard has received an e-mail from a member about the committee membership. Mr Beard clarified that the terms of reference for the committee specify 5 places for councillors and 10 places for members of public. There are currently 4 councillors and 9 members of public so we have a vacancy for each group.

It was discussed that it would be good for someone who lives in Elmstead with some relevant skills/background to join. Someone with experience in the building industry would be very welcome.

**24/093 Next stages of Design Program**

Mr Beard wasn't at the last meeting but looking at the minutes he was hoping that people would attend so that we could work any issues out. There was a long discussion on the route for the type of contract at that meeting, which has been raised a number of times. If we have to wait until the next meeting to make a final decision then it will be another month of a delay. Some members felt that as crucial members of the committee were missing a vote should not be taken. Others felt that it has already been 3 months since we received the quotes for the next stage and the decision needs to be made. The timeline was that we would start building in spring but that is now not likely to be until summer and we want the building to be watertight by winter.

The council is waiting to take a vote on the next steps which are to get to and perform the tender. It needs to decide the type of contract to move forward. Members gave their thoughts on whether to wait or not, and there were mixed views.

It was discussed that all we have at the minute is the planning drawings and permission but not the technical drawings and specification. We've spoken about the aesthetics but not the technical details. We need qualified specialists to do these and sign off on them, as we don't have the expertise or the insurance and liability cover. If anything goes wrong we need to be able to go back to the specialist and say it's their fault. It's not something volunteers can do, we need to spend the money to make sure it's done correctly.

The option to go straight out to builders to get quotes for a design and build was discussed. It was raised that this wouldn't be possible as we'd get 3 very different quotes that we don't have the expertise to decide between.

The agenda wording was also discussed and the lack of specificity on the taking of a vote. It was suggested that there could be an emergency committee meeting to hear from people who are on opposing sides, with questions and answers.

It was responded that we have had the architect and associated specialists' quotes for a while now and they are awaiting a decision, we don't know that the quotes will last another month.

There are different reasons for people not attending and they may not attend the next meeting but they should be given an opportunity to participate.

It was then suggested that an e-mail be sent to all committee members so that they can either respond to the e-mail with their views, or attend the Parish Council meeting next week, so that their views can be heard but the decision is not further delayed.

The clerk brought up a report of information gathered from our architect, the QS and a builder regarding the contract options and read through it. This has been shared with the committee and the council.

The advice is we can't go out to tender with just the documents we have now, it is too risky and it doesn't secure the required quality. So the comparison was between D&B with a full tender document put together with input from specialists, or a traditional contract where our specialists complete the building regulations and the QS does a complete bill of quantities.

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It was asked if we needed to go through a procurement process for the next stage of works with the architect and specialists subcontracted by them. The clerk sought legal advice from SLCC (The Society for Local Council Clerks) who advised that he would carry on the project with the current architect as they are specialist services who have already been contracted by the council. If we wish to re-tender then we need to look at all the specialist costs together which would require using contracts finder for the tender process. It would be difficult to find the time to run another tender, and this could hold up the project further.

It was raised that we don't have all the funding though so the project is liable to delays anyway.

Mrs Grotier was asked about school building projects she has been. There have been shocking results with builders running out of money and no one to contact with issues. Quotes can be so varied, if you narrow down the specification you get more like for like quotes.

Our solicitor has said that we will use a JCT contract which isn't 100% fixed, so we have to check for disclosure of which costs and materials can change.

Having heard the advice members were asked for their views. Mr Beard, Mrs Grotier and Mrs Grotier were in favour of a traditional contract.

An e-mail will be sent to the other committee members to ask for their views.

**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 costs for contracts not to be decided until a later date, and therefore commercially sensitive.**

The members of public left the room.

- i) *Timing of next stages given the current status of contributions and land ownership, what actions can be taken now?*

Please see above.

- ii) *An update on costs for the next stages to be received from DCB architects.*

The quotes received from DCB for the next stage of the project were shared. If we went to another architect we know from experience that it's likely they will use the same subcontractors, Brontide and Superstructures, so we will end up paying the same for them. (We originally sought quotes from architects for the technical drawings and they included costs from subcontractors for mechanical, electrical and structural engineering). The quotes are for a traditional contract.

It was asked if these costs would be saved with a D&B contract. The work would still need to be done by specialists and we would also need specialists to contribute to the tender documents. It's more than expected but a small percentage of the total build cost (as yet unknown.)

Some of the costs will be in meetings to look through costs and make decision on things like the heating system.

It's difficult to quantify and we don't have the time and skills to do it.

It was discussed that we can't quantify the price of the next stage without other quotes, but there is the time and money involved in another tender process.

- iii) *To further discuss a traditional contract versus a design and build contract.*

Please see above.

**24/094 Funding**

- i) *To review the current funding.*

The committee viewed the current funding figures. We have received all of the money that will be coming directly to the council's account. The funds are earning interest and some expenses have been deducted. We also have an amount towards the changing rooms that TDC are holding, as well as an open spaces contribution which we may be able to use

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towards the car park. The clerk went through the accounts that the funds with the PC are being held in. The interest will only be used on the building of the community centre. The clerk has discovered that the deed of variation for the Lanswood contribution was not completed and it's still designated for a 3G pitch. We need to get that changed. It was asked if there are any other building developments that could contribute to the new community centre. There aren't any.

ii) *To discuss options for additional funding.*

The clerk has found another potential funder. Cllr Gladwin is looking for potential funders for the solar panels.

**24/095 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only.**  
None raised.

**24/096 Date of next committee meeting**  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.27pm.

**Contact:** [elmsteadparish@gmail.com](mailto:elmsteadparish@gmail.com)

**Telephone:** 07907 610381