

Minutes of Meeting on 31st October 2024
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Mr R Fairweather (Vice chair – chairman for this meeting) , Cllr A Gladwin, Cllr M Hare, Mrs L Scott, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs R Valentine, Cllr M Ward and Mr S Wright.

Also Present: Mrs A Baxter (clerk)

Not present: Mr P Beard (Chairman), Mrs C Brock, Mrs J Grotier, Cllr L Richfield and Mrs J Triscott.

24/075 Chairman's welcome

Mr Fairweather welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

24/076 Apologies of Absence

Apologies were received from Mr P Beard, Mrs C Brock, Mrs J Grotier, Cllr L Richfield and Mrs J Triscott.

24/077 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests.

None.

24/078 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 29th August 2024.

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 29th August 2024 as true and accurate. Proposed: Mr Wright, Seconded: Cllr Gladwin, all in favour.

24/079 Public Speaking

None.

24/080 New Community Centre Planning Application (determination date 28th October 2024)

i) *An update on the status of the planning application.*

The application was approved on 28th October.

ii) *If available to review the planning conditions and establish which need immediate attention.*

Cllr Gladwin reported that there are 14 conditions overall. Some are very straightforward and for some it seemed that the officer wasn't happy discharging the conditions until nearer the time (biodiversity and surface water management). We will need to submit the conditions nearer the time. If we submit them all at the same time we'll only pay once more. The conditions can take 8 or 13 weeks to process.

The architect has established which conditions need immediate attention, to keep the timeline on track, including external materials – roof, external block work and the facing. Mr Fairweather pointed out that we've been told we can't decide a brick until we see what's available at the time. Also that he brought the materials in previously and thought it was decided.

24/081 New Community Centre/car park land and Open Space land

An update from our solicitor on the land transfers.

The clerk has had an update from our solicitor who spoke to Go Homes' solicitor who confirmed that they don't want to get involved in the build. We don't have this in writing. Their solicitor said that they would prefer to pay the £400k and leave it at that. Until we get the deed of variation done there is no commitment for them to do that. TDC charge between £1.k and £2.5k to do a deed of variation. Our solicitor said he would try to match this and we are waiting to hear back on what he can do.

Go's solicitor has agreed that there needs to be a right of way to access the open space land as there was previously no right of access. We will need to pay towards maintenance of the section of road to get to the community centre. There have been discussions on permissions to lay services and whether it would be cheaper for them to come in from the main road.

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Mr Fairweather has been told that all the services are already there, they are all stubbed off from the spur, we just need to get connected.

The clerk is chasing a further update.

Cllr Gladwin would like to see what happens with the drainage on the field when it starts getting wetter. Mr Fairweather said there is already water collecting.

Mr Fairweather asked who decided the species for the 80 trees? It was Mr Hastings who did the landscaping proposals.

Cllr Gladwin reported that looking at Tendring's regulations we can put some of the trees on other land we control, so we could look at putting them onto the open space.

The clerk shared that we have had an offer of free trees from a resident whose employer participates in a scheme annually. We are waiting to hear back.

24/082 Funding

To review the current funding.

The spreadsheet had been updated for costs and interest since the last meeting. We have not received the £400k from Go Homes yet.

It was clarified that there are £200k of the s106 funds in a Redwood account and £200k in a Unity 6 month deposit account. Unity will pay £4,238.36 interest on 17/3/25. Redwood has accrued £501.76 interest to date. They pay interest annually. Barclays has paid £1,928 interest so far in total.

It was discussed that we don't know how much the project will cost and what the shortfall will be.

Mr Fairweather felt it would have been better to get a builder lined up, let them do all the work and do all the costings.

It was asked about the possible funding from the Hills application. Cllr Gladwin responded that TDC wouldn't allow the proposed Hills development to contribute to the new community centre. Their policy dictated that it needed to go towards affordable housing. The clerk and Cllr Gladwin had a meeting with the director of planning, Mr Guiver, and he is looking into whether our Neighbourhood Plan can support the funding of community assets rather than affordable housing and we are waiting to hear.

24/083 Next stages of Design Program

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

These have not been received yet.

ii) *To discuss the options of a traditional route or a design and build.*

These are the 2 ways of going through the procurement process and building the community centre. The traditional route is us getting our own consultants and keeping control of the build, design and build (D&B) is giving it all over to builders and they appoint their own consultants and control the build. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The next step is the buildings regulations and the technical drawings that we will need consultants for. With a D&B contract the builder will be making their own decisions about the build.

If you go out to tender for a D&B contract, that will get awarded at a particular cost, the builder then looks for savings and gets the benefit of those savings. With a traditional route then everything is already decided before we go out to tender and if we find any costs savings during that process then we will benefit from those.

With D&B there would be little oversight or recourse over the build, but with the traditional route our architect and QS would be inspecting the build regularly.

Mr Fairweather asked why it's necessary to have an architect and QS doing that.

The QS will be checking that the quantities and prices of the materials is correct. The architect will be project managing the consultants and the procurement process. We don't have the expertise to do that.

The procurement regulations are changing in February 2025.

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As it stands if we want to appoint a consultant ourselves, for example a structural engineer, we will need to go through the tender process and do the work for that process ourselves. Our architect has consultants lined up from when they previously quoted for the building regulations/technical drawings and they just need to ask for updated quotes. We need mechanical engineering, structural engineering and a QS. We met those consultants previously.

It was asked why we couldn't get someone to do the whole job. It was replied that we would still need to do detailed drawings for the tender. We also need a costing. It was asked why we can't get a builder to do all of that. It was answered that in order to get a builder on board we need to go out to tender, and we need the tender documents in order to do that. The details need to be planned in or we'll get an unknown number of tenders that will be vastly different and it will be very difficult to decide between them.

It was asked if we can use the planning permission to go out to tender. There is still too much detail that hasn't been decided. For example the heating. We end up with 10 tenders with different systems that could vary vastly on cost. If we don't define the details their tenders will be different.

It was felt by some that builders could do all of it.

Cllr Gladwin explained that in order to tender for the builders we need to appoint consultants to make decisions and to produce the details required for the tender documents. For a D&B contract the same consultant fees will be built into their costings and we'll pay for the same thing twice.

If we go the traditional route we'll get the details nailed down precisely and each tender will have to meet that specification. With D&B it will be different specifications.

It was responded that the specifications wouldn't be much different.

The kitchen was used as an example. If the builder says he's put in a £50k kitchen we only have their word for it. There was a disagreement on whether having a D&B contract would disadvantage us for this example.

With D&B all the consultants are working for the builder, with the traditional route our consultants are working with our best interests in mind. For D&B we are putting our faith in the builder. When Mr Fairweather met with Cadman's, Vaughan and Blythe and Hills they all seemed to be reputable and had our interests at heart.

Cllr Hare didn't think the architects were the ones to manage the project as it would add a lot to the costs. We don't have their quotes yet though.

We would need to appoint someone to be our agent and protect our interests.

There was a discussion on trusting a builder, whether we need to appoint our own consultants if a builder is saying they will do it all, how much detail we need to put into the tender, how different the tenders will be.

Under the procurement regulations we won't be getting 3 quotes, we will be putting our tender onto contracts finder.

Mr Fairweather asked what we need to do now to get the project moving. We need to get a price and drawings, a QS, M&E and structural engineer. The QS will give us a cost. It was asked why we can't start the tender now – because we don't have tender documents. Cllr Hare asked why we can't use the planning documents and felt that the matter was being over complicated.

To go out to tender we need a tender document which needs the input of consultants, so Mr Fairweather suggested we get them on board. That can be decided formally by the PC at its next meeting.

If we are asking DCB to quote to put a tender pack together they need to know whether that is a tender for a traditional or D&B contract. The tender pack will be different for each.

Do we know what the procurement changes will be in February 2025?

The clerk is checking with SLCC.

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If we start the tender process before February it is thought we can use the current regulations.

We should have the costs for the next stage for the next PC meeting.

The clerk checked with SLCC as to whether we need to go out to tender again for the architect work, and we don't need to, but we can. Cllr Hare expressed concerns about the costings. Mr Fairweather felt it was taking too long and we could have been doing something during the wait for the planning permission, there has not been enough progress.

iii) *Timing.*

Mr Fairweather left the meeting.

24/084 A report on any other updates since the last Committee meeting

To include the location of the 3 large oak trees.

This was discussed during previous items.

We have received a reply from Essex Highways to say that the trees are on our land, not their land. The tree officer at TDC said that historically when Highways took on responsibility for verges they took the verge from the other side of a line of trees or a hedge so it's unlikely that they took on the oaks. The trees and shrubs will be our responsibility when we get the land.

24/085 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only.

Not discussed.

24/086 Date of next committee meeting

Not discussed.

The meeting closed at 8.26pm.

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