

Minutes of Meeting on 9th March 2023
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Mr P Beard (Chairman), Mrs P Anderson, Mrs C Brock, Mr R Fairweather, Cllr Adam Gladwin, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs J Triscott, Cllr Martine Ward, Mrs R Valentine and Mr S Wright.

Also present: Mrs Baxter (clerk) and 1 member of public

Not present: Mr S Higgins and Mrs J Grotier.

23/013 Chairman's welcome

Mr Beard welcomed everyone and thanked them for giving up their time.

23/014 Apologies of Absence

Mrs Grotier sent her apologies.

23/015 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests

None.

23/016 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 16th February 2023.

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 16th February 2023 as true and accurate.

Proposed: Mr Beard, Seconded: Cllr Ward, all in favour.

23/017 Public Speaking

None.

23/018 A report on any updates since the last Committee meeting to include if relevant:

i) The status of the Charity Field development.

Cllr Gladwin has received an e-mail from TDC in response to questions we sent about the Deed of Variation (DOV). The e-mail was shared on screen. They are at 37 occupations. Mr Beard went through the questions and answers. The clerk is to share the e-mail with the committee.

The DOV states that the open space should be made available for use and certified once the 25th occupation is reached, which we were notified about on the 14th July 2022. This is for the public open space land. It also states that by the 35th occupation the owner should offer to transfer the land to the council for £1. They can't offer it though until they have landscaped it according to the plan. Once it's offered, we need to accept it within 2 months or it would go to a management company.

There was a discussion over whether we would want that land at present.

We asked about the implications of the 2 month acceptance period falling across the expiry date of the planning application and were advised to implement the current permission first, by making a material commencement and discharging conditions 9 and 13.

There was a discussion on what implementing it means, breaking ground. We have been advised on this and Cllr Gladwin suggested starting the car park or digging a trench. It was also thought that laying a slab or putting in a framework on a concrete base might be needed. There are also pre-commencement conditions that need doing, they are for the builder or architect to deal with.

Go Homes have not been able to start building because they are waiting for the funds to come from the Church Road development.

If we don't receive the 3rd party contribution by the 12 month anniversary of the 25th occupation the community centre land will be transferred to the council, so we need to be ready for that transfer in July this year as the 25th occupation was notified on 12th July 2022.

TDC can't foresee any implications but says if we have any concerns to seek legal advice. The cost of the building in the DOV is not index linked.

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The risks of not getting the land now that we are entitled to it was discussed. If they have to do the landscaping now it will have to be to the current specification, not the one we are trying to get it changed to of a blank canvas. Mr Toulson is leaving Go Homes, and it was him that was following up on the change to the landscaping. We don't know when he is leaving.

ii) The status of the Church Road development.

We don't have an update on the 17 occupancies, they need to reach 20 for their trigger point.

iii) An update on the status of s106 payments.

The clerk has been chasing TDC for a complete list of all contributions towards the site. We have received some information but she's still chasing the complete list. It was asked where the money is going. Some will be going to the council account (the Charity Field £400k) and some will go to TDC's account (the School Road £400k plus indexation). The need for additional funding was discussed with the costs having gone up in the last few years. The Lottery needs a business plan to look at our funding request.

23/019 Building of New Community Centre:

i) To discuss the feasibility of engaging with another building contractor to plan and build the new community centre.

Go Homes don't have the appetite to build the community centre, they are residential house builders. It's possible that if we say we are going to find another builder they wouldn't be unhappy, and the legal agreement facilitates this. Members are concerned that Go Homes won't build it, as people are leaving the business, the houses and bungalows are nearly finished and they are marketing the bungalows.

It was asked whether, if we go with another builder, will they do their own plans? Carters Builders were suggested who built the Clacton community centre. If we speak to other builders then that is keeping our options open, but not necessarily closing the door to Go Homes building it. The additional timing issue of using other builders was asked about. If we do go to other builders, then we will need to go through a tender process for the contract. We can't get quotes using the drawings we currently have which are not detailed enough. It was suggested we ask builders for an estimate of cost and whether they would want to do their own drawings.

It was asked if the council has the final say on who will build the building. The committee will make a recommendation to the council but as it's an advisory committee the final decision has to go to the council.

It was raised that there could be a conflict of interest with some builders working in the Parish.

It was resolved, referring back to the e-mail we received from TDC that was discussed earlier, that we would ask TDC's planning enforcement team to contact Go Homes regarding the breaches in open space land availability and transfer to the council. Proposed: Mrs Triscott, Seconded: Mrs Brock, all in favour.

Members were concerned about the community centre land which isn't due for transfer until July.

It was resolved to engage with other builders to gauge their interest and see if they are in a situation where they can build a community centre. Proposed: Cllr Fairweather, Seconded: Mrs Triscott, all in favour. This is also to be recommended to the council. The clerk advised that the costings will come at a later stage as we need to go through a regulatory tender process but they could ask for a loose idea of cost.

It was suggested that at least 6 builders would need to be contacted to try and get 3 quotes.

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It was resolved to set up a working party to have those initial conversations with potential builders. The members of the working party are Mr Fairweather, Mrs Triscott, Mrs Stammers and Mrs Brock as a substitute member. Proposed: Cllr Ward, Seconded: Mr Wright, all in favour.

ii) To discuss the timing if necessary for a reapplication of the planning application.
It was discussed again what counts as commencement of a build. Mr Lang sent the relevant legislation about it which was reviewed. It sounds as if one length of footing can be dug. It will come down to what TDC's planning officers are happy with.
It was raised that there could be savings to be made in changing the design and making a new application (this came out of the architect meetings). It was also pointed out that even if we do everything right and don't change the planning, we might not make the deadline.

23/020 Exclusion of press and public for private and confidential matters

The public left the building.

23/021 New Community Centre Technical drawings

i) To discuss an architect's quote received via Go Homes.
Cllr Gladwin reported that the quote does not include the 8 different contractors that the other quotes included, which would mean we would need to go out to 8 contractors ourselves with tenders for 3 quotes for each. If you add in the cost of the contractors, it takes their total cost over the maximum figure we received on the other 6 quotes.
It was resolved to discount this quote. Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Cllr Ward, all in favour.

ii) Meetings were arranged with chosen architects for the technical drawings. To review the output of those meetings.
Mr Beard thanked the members who spent their time meeting 3 architects. 2 were keen on reapplying for the planning as the design could be improved. The roof is overly complicated which makes it more expensive. We could also look at changing some materials to make the project cheaper. It was asked if the architects would supervise the project, and the answer is no, they would meet monthly. It will be expensive to appoint a middleman. The architects named builders they work with locally; one is Rose Builders. The architects are all local. All 3 could design the community centre and be effective.
A new planning application would cost £250 to submit and one architect quoted £6,000 to submit with changes. However, they could save 5 or 6 figures on the building cost with a new design.
If a new planning application is made, then residents can't object to the principle of a community centre as that has already been agreed in the outline permission. An architect could design it in a way it would be very difficult to object to and they could also do PR for it. New planning will slow the project but that's not necessarily a bad thing, as it will be a while before we get the money. It could be 4-5 months before they meet the trigger.
Cllr Gladwin said that the architects have a schedule of works, and they will do the working drawings which the builder can quote and build from.
Mr Fairweather raised that we are likely to be short on the cost of the building and we need to save the money and get a builder on board who will do the drawings for us.
There was a discussion about whether not having an architect would speed it up. It was discussed that there would be advantages to having a builder doing everything. It was suggested that the extra scrutiny of an architect would be helpful, and that you haven't lost the money you spend on architects as the builders will charge for their inhouse architects to do it.

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Going to builders we'll need to find out the cost of the drawings inhouse and there is no guarantee they will be cheaper. However, they might be or we might get a better price to get the work.

Cllr Gladwin added a 3rd option. Ask an architect to resubmit the planning with a chosen design and prepare some tender drawings so that we can do a tender process to appoint a builder, and then let the builder do the final working drawings. That might cost about £10k depending upon how long it takes the architect to make the changes.

It was asked about whether we could keep the solar panels with a new roof design, and we can. Conversations with the architects included whether we should keep with a timber frame or change to bricks, for longevity.

The builders will need exactly the same brief. If we open that up to "value engineering" they will all come back with something different and we would not then be able to compare like for like.

Timing was discussed, and as it was felt that with the realisation that making another planning application would be likely and possibly preferable there is no need to rush what we are doing at this stage. Could the council defer deciding on appointing an architect until after the working party has had time to meet with builders? That was agreed but the architects are waiting to hear back, we can't keep them waiting for months.

The clerk advised that the same thing needs to go to each builder so if the working party can use the same brief that Cllr Gladwin used that would be good. Cllr Gladwin will send this to the working party.

Information regarding architects' quotes is in a confidential section.

23/022 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only.

None.

23/023 Date of next committee meeting

13th April 2023.

The meeting closed at 9.36pm.

Minuted by Mrs A Baxter

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