

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the consultative meeting of Asset Management Forum held online via zoom on 27 July 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.38 pm

55 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

56 Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 9 March 2021 were recommended to senior officers for approval.

57 Declarations of interest

Cllr P Hayward; Minute 61; Personal interest: Parish Clerk to All Saints, Chardstock and Newton Poppleford and Harpford Councils
Cllr D Ledger: Minute 61; Personal interest: Member of Seaton Town Council.

58 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

59 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential or exempt items.

60 Property Matters Newsletter

The Forum considered the July edition of the Property Matters newsletter, which highlights recent work by the Place Assets and Commercialisation team, including:

- Workshop unit let at Millwey Rise workshops;
- Business rate work to identify potential savings on the costs associated with the Councils commercial estate;
- Right to Buy (RTB) valuations in demand;
- Making an entrance at EDBC with a new video door entry system;
- New look for Honiton Pool with work commencing in September, due for completion before the end of the year;
- COVID precautionary work;
- Asset valuation work completed.

Questions and comments arising from the newsletter included:

- Implications of the demand in RTB valuations, with approximately 60 to 70 applications being processed;
- Clarification on the recent Cabinet decision on the former Millwey Rise football pitches in Axminster, whereby the resolution was that the housing land was reserved for affordable/social housing development and associated community

facilities, subject to planning permission. The next step was to explore the delivery models;

- A technical question on where RTB applies would be investigated and responded to after the meeting.

The Forum noted the newsletter.

61 **Community Asset Transfer Procedure - results of consultation**

The Service Lead for Place, Assets and Commercialisation updated the Forum on feedback from the consultation on the Community Asset Transfer Procedure. Nine responses were received from town and parish councils, broadly in support of the procedure.

In conjunction with the consultation period, a review of the core data of the asset register has been underway to help inform decision making on which assets should be within the scope of transfer

A small number had made an approach for transfer, and these will be explored to establish if those requests are still valid once the new procedure has been adopted.

The next step was to prepare a report for Cabinet to consider the formal adoption of the new procedure.

Questions and comments included:

- Discussion on the need for an appeal process within the procedure. On balance, with particular note at the first stage where the Portfolio Holder would decide if a requested asset should go forward for transfer, the Chair outlined the steps he would take to confer with other Portfolio Holders – leading to the view of the Forum that an appeal process was not necessary to be included;
- The procedure did not have a time limitation on any subsequent application made, should the first application be refused;
- The timing of the first stage of the process was set as a maximum of four months, in line with the frequency that the Forum met and therefore could consider the applications; however, any application would be processed as swiftly as possible in accordance and it was expected that less complicated transfers might take far less time to decide at the first stage;
- In order to manage expectation and limited resource, those towns and parishes that had already approached the Council would be reviewed first.

The Forum requested that the officer prepared a report for Cabinet, recommending that the draft Community Asset Transfer Procedure is adopted, which the Service Lead for Place, Assets and Commercialisation agreed to undertake.

62 **Request for budget from Asset Maintenance Reserve**

The report presented to the Forum set out the requirement for emergency works to the following sites:

- Sidmouth Swimming Pool £35k (excluding VAT)
- Connaught Gardens Shelter 1B £62k (excluding VAT)
- Connaught Gardens Watch Tower £25K (excluding VAT)

- Exmouth Town Hall and Exmouth Pavilion Mansafe System £9,700 (excluding VAT)
- Initial remedial works from Fire Risk Assessments £44K (excluding VAT) with further capital bid required
- Norman Lockyer Observatory £70K (excluding VAT)

The request was made in order to avoid delaying works until the 2022/23 capital bids are assessed in December. The Asset Maintenance Reserve had at present £778K available, therefore covering this use of £245,700 of expenditure.

Questions and comments included:

- Justification for replacement boiler being fuelled by gas discussed, and recognised as acceptable for the lifespan of 10/15 years which falls before the Government target of no gas boilers by 2040. Research was done into other options, such as ground source heat pumps, but was not viable for the Pool in this instance;
- Any oak required for the works on the Connaught shelter would be from sustainable sources;
- The lease of the Observatory to the Society runs until 2035. Members felt it would be beneficial to promote the value of the Observatory and that Council branding would be appreciated, as it was a Council asset;
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance would discuss the Asset Maintenance Reserve with the Strategic Lead for Finance, in light of the concern about how long the reserve would last against emergency works in future years;
- Council would need to consider if any receipts from asset disposals in future years would be best allocated to the Asset Maintenance Reserve to fund the maintenance and enhancement of assets.

Recommended to Cabinet

that Cabinet recommend to Council that the sum of £245,700 be made available from the Asset Maintenance Reserve to fund the emergency works to the properties identified within the report as follows:

- a) Sidmouth Swimming Pool £35K (excluding VAT)
- b) Connaught Gardens Shelter 1B £62K (excluding VAT)
- c) Connaught Gardens Watch Tower £25K (excluding VAT)
- d) Exmouth Town Hall and Exmouth Pavilion Mansafe System £9,700 (excluding VAT)
- e) Initial remedial works from Fire Risk Assessments £44K (excluding VAT) with further capital bid required
- f) Norman Lockyer Observatory £70K (excluding VAT)

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Place and Prosperity Investment Fund

The Service Lead for Place, Assets and Commercialisation provided an update to the Forum on the revision of the new draft Investment Framework. Following discussion at the previous meeting, further drafting has taken place to take account of that discussion, but competing work priorities in the past few months had delayed the revision.

A new timeline for completion of the framework had therefore been drawn up, with the intention of adoption of the framework before the end of 2021 subject to necessary approvals.

The Forum noted the update.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott
P Hayward (Chair)
D Ledger
J Rowland
G Pratt

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

O Davey
S Jackson
G Jung
P Millar
A Moulding
G Pook

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Rob Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor
Alison Hayward, Project Manager Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Steve Pratten, Interim Principal Surveyor
Jorge Pineda-Langford, Principal Building Surveyor, Property & FM
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer