

## **Elsenham Parish Council**

### **Minutes of New Community Centre Working Group Meeting, held at 7.30 pm at Old Frank's on Monday 15 January 2024**

#### **Present:**

Dr G Mott (Chairman, GM), Mrs B Donald (BD),  
Mr A Hathaway (AH), Mrs E Terry (ET)

*In the absence of the Parish Clerk, the minutes were taken by GM.*

#### **1. Apologies for lateness:**

Mr B Burlton (BD), Mr R Gooding (RG)

#### **2. Apologies for absence:**

Ms A Mowbray (AM), Mr B Ogilvie (BO), Mrs L Johnson (Parish Clerk, LJ)

#### **3. Absent:**

Mr P Jarvis (PJ)

#### **4. Declaration of Interests.** None

#### **5. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2023.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 were agreed and signed by GM and will be delivered to LJ.

#### **6. Transfer of land.**

a. Land (David Wilson Homes).

Last email from Nockolds 4 January

General dissatisfaction was expressed at the extended period of time which has been taken, and the suggestion made that the PC should seriously consider transferring to other solicitors

b. Ransom strip (Crest Nicholson).

Noted that this issue should be resolved when the land transfer is completed.

#### **7. Funding.**

a. BB to give report on Public Works loans (carried forward from December 2023)  
The item was deferred until later, pending the arrival of BB. See 9. below.

b. Grant funding application with EYFC to the Football Foundation.

GM reported that the agreement form was ready to sign, and had been sent to him, but has not been received. To progress further with LJ.

c. 'Winning strategies for the funding game' - NALC course.  
Possible sources of funding forwarded 10 January.

GM said that unfortunately the course was of little value. The list of possible funders had been received. The only ones which appear to be worthy of note are:

Heat Decarbonisation plan for Community buildings	£74K	Salix - Heat Decarbonisation fund Phase 4
Solar panel and battery back-up for Pinetrees CC	£5.5K	SEE - Resilience Communities fund

The second example is probably for an existing building, rather than a new project.

d. Possible S106 contribution, 40 dwellings off Robin Hood Road.

GM said that he had contacted UDC Planning to ask that a contribution is included in their response, as consultees, to the Planning Inspectorate under the S62A provisions. It is included, but with no amount mentioned. The PC's response objects to the application, but includes a request for £95,385, index-linked, if the application is agreed.

e. GM quoted from the October meeting of the Working Group (attended by GM, BD, AH and PJ): 'It was agreed that there is a need to secure buy-in from the local community. Village groups should be invited to a meeting to discuss initiatives for fund raising. A village lottery was mentioned. LJ should be asked to secure a list from UDC of funding opportunities.'

A general discussion followed. It was noted that a list of funding opportunities has not been obtained from UDC.

AH, BD and others said that it is necessary to generate interest. The potential attractions of the new building should be publicised, including café and changing rooms, and there should be a tie-in with childcare. It was acknowledged that there is a difficulty in reaching people. Clubs in the village should be used to promote the new facility. School book-bags are another possible medium, and Tesco was mentioned. *Elsenham News* could be utilised in different ways. There could be an issue where the CC is promoted on both the front and back page. Deliverers could leave a flier, together with a bang on the door. Ideally, before any referendum is held, everyone in the village will have been reached.

## **8. Invitation to architects on Government website.**

a. Deadline for responses is Tuesday 23 January 2024.

b. Finalise moderator and appraisers

It was confirmed that GM will be moderator, and the appraisers will be BB, RG, AH and AM, with BD as reserve appraiser if needed.

c. Opening of tenders

GM will arrange with LJ the opening of the tenders.

d. Distribution of tenders

e. Date of meeting to review tenders and make recommendations

GM noted that holding interviews with short-listed candidates is omitted from e.

Implementation of d. and e. is largely dependent upon the number of tenders received. GM will discuss with LJ after the tenders are opened.

8.30 pm. BB joined the meeting

8.35 pm. RG joined the meeting

Further discussion was held under this heading later - see 10. below

## **9. Funding**

Resumed from 7. a. above.

a. BB to give report on Public Works loans (carried forward from December 2023). BB reported that he had pursued this question, following the note from LJ. He has spoken to the Chief Executive of Essex Association of Local Councils. There is a normally a maximum loan of £500,000 in a single financial year - although there is some flexibility. There is a need to make contact with people at the Fund itself. On BB's calculation, we would be able to fund c. 40% of the total cost, which means we would need to borrow c. 60%. If we borrowed over 25 years, there would be a repayment commitment of c. £90,000 pa - which is 'a big chunk of money'. A precept of £40,000 costs 46p./week.

BB continued that we need contact with those who have secured and managed loans. It would be useful to know the proportion of loan to value at Manuden. Duxford produced an EALC pack on what action is needed. Two power points are available. We would need a public consultation exercise before we can make much progress. In order to secure £1.1million, we would need to borrow £1.8million.

RG said that there is a need to manage the project and the cash flow. There is a degree of complexity in the calculation. A limit of £500,000 would be a very tight limit. The funds could be drawn down as required. There are templates of documents to be completed - much documentation is needed, together with evidence of public consultation. A clear budget is needed if the project is to go ahead.

BD said that we need to hit as many of the demographic as possible. The summer fete should be used. There should be a page on the website. We could knock on doors with a questionnaire, and come back twenty minutes later for collection.

BB said that we need to demonstrate that we've done a comprehensive consultation, and there is a formal structure to consultation. We need to move forward and develop a plan.

BD asked whether S106 money for childcare could be put into the project. RG replied that the link is too remote, and BB pointed out that the details made known that day had a deadline for response of the end of March, just ten weeks away.

AH said that if it's known there is the possibility of a building, they might come back next year.

## **10. Invitation to architects on Government website.**

Resumed from 8. above.

GM noted that he, AH and LJ had met one architect on site, and answered questions. The chief messages which GM derived were the necessity to secure buy-in from the public, and the possibilities of holding conferences as a good source of revenue.

## **11. Alan Lamb (AL)**

a. Agreed role and contact to date.

GM said that AL had advised that we should defer, pending requests to architects for

pre-qualification as to willingness and competence to tender. However, it was agreed with him later that we would continue, on the basis that we are not bound to accept the lowest or any tender, and can always start again if the responses are deemed unsatisfactory.

AL had said that the Government website includes a sample of the document regarding the competence to tender, but GM was unable to find it and thought it important that it should be used when we go out to tender for contractors.

It was agreed that AL should be asked for the location of the form.

AL had been unable to find the Terms and Conditions document as part of the Invitation to Tenderers on the Government website, which he regarded as to the good, and something which can be addressed later.

b. Possible future role

GM referred to the minutes of the last meeting:

## **2. Plans**

AL said he could help with the process of assessing the plans. He knows what to look for in plans, what will work and what will not.

## **3. Long Term plan**

AL could help with the long-term master plan, what must be done and when to do it.

These possibilities can be considered in due course.

Also, it might be useful to ask AL for help in submitting invitations to contractors onto the Government website in due course.

## **12. Business Plan**

Draft distributed.

A general discussion took place.

AH: We need contact with people who know what these things look like.

BB: Within the group, and people we can access, we should have the competence. As with Manuden and Duxford, it will need to be well run.

RG: It is relatively straightforward to assess fixed costs: energy costs, decorating every ten years, and so on. It is more difficult to assess the income which can be relied upon.

AH: The Memorial Hall is run like a business. We need to cast our net wide - music, bands, etc. We need to find something that is not provided for already.

RG: Facility for hot-desking.

BD: Diversification; adaptable; future-proofing.

RG: Flexibility; meet the demand; films. The Rhodes Centre in Stortford has a diverse offer, including a big dance hall. We need wi-fi; bluetooth; quiet areas; gaming; citizens' advice.

BB: The specification of the business plan should include essentials and nice-to-have.

AH: The Memorial Hall is open seven days a week. Total revenue is £13,500 pa.

BD: We would charge the Football Club for use of the changing rooms.

BB: We need a schedule: what do we need to borrow? We should talk to people with experience: Duxford, Manuden, Great Chesterford.

BD: Takeley would let us have details.

It was agreed that all would look at the existing draft Business Plan, with a view to proposing suggested amendments for the next meeting.

### **13. Terms of Reference**

Draft distributed.

GM said there is a question as to whether the group is a Working Group or a Committee. He has come to the view that it should be a Committee.

Members were agreed that, if a Committee is formed, co-opted members should have voting rights.

The draft ToR will be presented to the next meeting of the PC. Any suggested amendments should be sent to LJ and GM.

### **14. Next steps.**

Retained for reference purposes

- Appoint architects.
- Costing programme (helped by architects). See also 'Work Stages and Costs'.
- Public Exhibition - produced by architects.
- Outline Planning Permission. (Might not be necessary.)
- Referendum - after Public Exhibition and Consultation, small booklet in the Elsenham News.
- Business Plan - incomplete version available.
- Public Works (or other) loan - needs Business Plan and Referendum.
- Detailed Planning Permission.
- Go out to tender for contract.

It was agreed that Outline Planning Permission is not needed as a separate stage.

### **15. Next meeting.**

Monday 19 February 2024, 7.30 pm., and the third Monday in the month thereafter.

### **16. AOB.**

None

The meeting finished at 9.40pm.