

Elsenham Parish Council

Minutes of New Community Centre Committee Meeting, held at 7.30pm in Old Frank's on Monday 19 February 2024

Present:

Dr. G Mott (Chair, GM), Mr. B Burlton (BB), Ms. A Mowbray (AM),
Mr. A Hathaway (AH), Mrs. E Terry (ET), Mr. P Jarvis (PJ) and
Mrs. L Johnson (Parish Clerk LJ).

1. Election of Chair.

Proposal: GM is elected as Chair to the Community Centre Committee.
BB proposed, AM seconded, the vote was carried unanimously.

2. Apologies for absence:

Mrs. B Donald (BD), Mr. B Ogilvie (BO), and Mr. R Gooding (RG).

3. Declaration of Interests: None.

4. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024.

The minutes of the meeting on 15 January 2024, with one amendment on the apologies for lateness, Mr. B Burlton should be BB not BD, the minutes were signed by the Chair as a true record.

5. To approve the minutes of the appraisal meeting held on 12 February 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2024, with two amendments, Number 3 on the minutes, cost to low should read, cost too low. Plus, Number 4 on the minutes, AH said the Memorial Hall generates £20,000 per year should read AH said the Memorial Hall generates £13,500 per year. The minutes were signed by the Chair as a true record.

It was agreed that the minutes from 12 February 2024 would not be made available to the public. They contained details of the tenders received which should not be in the public domain. Meetings in the future, when discussing tenders, should be closed to the public. GM is to write a short summary of the meeting for the public view.

6. Actions following appraisal meeting.

a. Recommendation from the meeting on 12 February 2024.

It had been agreed at the meeting on 12 February 2024 that the tenders had not followed EPC specifications completely and were not acceptable. The main reasons being that the architects had not consulted the requirements for sport changing facilities set out by the Football Foundation. Without the changing room complying to these requirements EPC would not be able to proceed with applying for a grant from the Football Foundation.

One tender had not included the facility for a café, this is important as it should supply EPC with some revenue.

There was also concern regarding the difference in cost of the project, which ranged from £3,175,000 to £1,773,000. This calculated as £1,750 per sqm and £3,500 per sqm. Alan Lamb had said a good target is £2,500 per metre. Neither had smaller halls adjoining the main hall.

It had been agreed to shelve both tenders.

BB said EPC cannot afford a £3million building. EPC have a wish list that is just not affordable. EPC need to go back a stage, see what can be changed.

b. Specification of the building.

BB produced a new scaled back plan of the community centre, which would be more achievable in terms of price. The large room could be retained, but with windows and be divided into three meeting rooms via folding partitions. The height of the hall could be lowered, and the toilets moved closer to the hall. The café would form the centre of the hall with spacious room for tables and chairs to accommodate large groups. There would be one kitchen, a plant room, a parish council office and changing facilities that conformed to the Football Foundation standards.

The points raised during the following discussion are that two kitchens were required, maybe the kitchen could be divided into two. One for the café and a smaller one to serve the hall users, with maybe just a kettle, fridge, sink and work surface.

PJ said the football pavilion on the Bloor Homes development site will have a room and a kitchen, which could be used for meetings.

ET said it would be nice to include a small room for the Citizen's Advice, where residents can speak online to a member of the Citizen's Advice team.

ET said the Parish Council Office was quite large, and this could be reduced in size.

GM said that it is likely that, at some point in the future, the PC will find it necessary to employ a second member of staff to supplement the Clerk.

There is never enough storage.

It was undecided whether to equip the hall for theatrical events.

ET is to carry out research on how much room is needed to store a stage. The Village Hall has a stage, but it belongs to Elsenham Primary School. If the school is prepared to hire out the stage when hiring out the Village Hall it may not be necessary for a stage in the community centre.

It was agreed that the specifications for the tenders could be reduced, keeping, a large hall, with dividers.

Two kitchens, one serving the café the other with just a kettle, fridge sink and work tops for the hall hirers.

A Parish Council Office.

A café.

Changing facilities.

Toilets.

c. Memorial Hall and ECA.

A meeting with ECA Management Team needs to be held, to discuss the Memorial Hall and the Community Centre working together. AH said it would be best to have specific questions to put to the Management Team on how this can work. An agenda needs to be agreed.

BB agreed to work further on a revised specification and the business plan.

7. Transfer of land.

It was agreed to send the following email to Nockolds.
The last we heard from you on the transfer of the Community Centre land was on 4 January 2024, when you said that you would give the other side a nudge and be in touch. On 5 May 2023, you reported that the developer's solicitor had accepted all your proposed amendments to the transfer document, and you attached the latest version. We expected that the transfer would be concluded shortly thereafter, but that has not happened. We are baffled and perplexed by the long delay.
We are now close to the point where we need to take possession of the land. Would you please do whatever it takes to conclude the transfer expeditiously.

8. Funding.

a. Interest on funds held by UDC.

It was agreed to send a Freedom of Information request to UDC asking for dates of when the Section 106 payments were paid to UDC and their amounts?
What bank account are the funds held in and what is the interest rate on that account?
How much interest has occurred so far on the funds?
Please supply EPC with the legislation or UDC policy where it states that any interest accrued on Section 106 monies are retained by UDC.
UDC must answer within 20 working days after receiving the request.
GM to write the Freedom of Information request.

AM said that if the community centre does not go ahead any remaining funds plus interest must go back to the developer.

GM said the time limit David Wilson Homes and Crest Nicholson both state that the funds must be used in 10 years from the time the payment was made. David Wilson Homes paid theirs between April and September 2021. Crest Nicholson paid theirs between March 2022 and April 2023. Vistry do not specify a time limit.

b. Request for S106 contribution from Robin Hood Road application.

It looks very unlikely that EPC will receive a contribution to the community centre from the Robin Hood Road application. A decision as to whether the planning application will go ahead has not yet been made.

c. Increase in precept agreed at PC meeting on 5 February 2024.

At the Parish Council meeting on 5 February 2024 the Councillors voted to increase the precept by another £25,000. This is to reduce the increase in 2025/26 to pay back the Public Works Loan. However, the vote was not unanimous with 6 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

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

EPC has asked the Football Club to find out the number of years the Football Foundation requires from EPC to commit to allowing the Football Club to play on the Elsenham playing field, but there has been no reply. PJ said he will find out the answer.

e. List of funding opportunities from UDC.

UDC are in the process of looking at their grants for the coming years. They are unable to give EPC a list until summertime.

f. Public Works Loan (see 15 January minutes, 9.)

- i. Contact with Public Works Loan Board.
- ii. Contact with those who have secured and managed loans.
- iii. Documentation required.
This is still ongoing. BB had contacted Didcot Parish Council, who had taken out a Public Works Loan of £2.4million. When EPC make their application for a Public Works Loan their accounts must be in order.

9. Buy-in from the local community and generating interest.

EPC need to look at the following list to see which needs to be implemented and for members to take ownership of one or two on the list.

- a) Meeting with village groups.
- b) Village lottery.
- c) Publicity (café, changing rooms, childcare).
- d) Clubs in the village.
- e) School book-bags.
- f) Tesco.
- g) Elsenham News.
- h) Summer fete.
- i) Page on website.
- j) Questionnaire distributed through knocking on doors.

10. Business Plan.

BB hopes to have a skeleton business plan prepared before the next meeting.

11. Payment of invoices by UDC.

Proposal: Alan Lamb is paid £500 for his review of the tenders.

GM proposed, BB seconded, the vote was carried unanimously.

It was not yet decided whether EPC would employ Alan Lamb for possible future roles.

LJ had asked Emma Blazeby at UDC, for a reimbursement on the first payment to Alan Lamb on 29 January. UDC have not yet reimbursed the money.

12. Next steps.

Retained for reference purposes.

- Appoint architects.
- Costing programme (helped by architects). See also 'Work Stages and Costs'.
- Public Exhibition - produced by architects.
- 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.

13. Next meeting.

Monday 18 March 2024, 7.30 pm. and the third Monday in the month thereafter.

14. AOB.

There was no other business.

The meeting finished at 9.30pm.