

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2011 in Committee Room 2 Civic Offices

Present:	Colleen O'Boyle (COB)	(Director - CSS) (Chairman)
	Mike Tipping (MT)	(CSS - Corporate Property Officer);
	Chris Pasterfield (CP)	(CSS - Estates and Valuation);
	Alan Hall (AH)	(Director of Housing);
	Nigel Richardson (NR)	(Planning and Economic Development)
	Laura MacNeill (LM)	(Environment and Street Scene)
	Teresa Brown (TB)	(Principal Accountant);
	John Gilbert (JG)	(Director of Environment and Street Scene);
	Derek Macnab (DM)	(Acting Chief Executive)
Apologies:	Bob Palmer (BP)	(Director of Finance and ICT)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 20 January 2011

Agreed as a correct record

2. Langston Road Depot Site Loughton

BLP the Council's legal advisers and Colliers had held their first meeting with Polofind and its professional advisors. As was expected the meeting had been robust, particularly in relation to discussions around the claw back provisions in the conditions of sale of the T11 Site.

The idea of Polofind making a contribution to the construction cost of the replacement depots had been raised by the Council's advisors as a way for Polofind to meet its obligations under the claw back provisions.

NR reported on progress with the planning application. The Environment Agency issues had now been resolved and the highways issues were gradually being resolved although a formal response was still awaited from Essex County Highways. It appeared they had a lengthy consultation process to go through involving their consultants Mouchell.

Issues still to be resolved related to the amount of on site parking provision within the proposed development and peak rate capacity traffic safety issues at the Langston Road/Chigwell Lane junction.

NR also reported that formal objections had been received from Loughton Town Council and the Loughton Residents Association.

A formal presentation had now been arranged for the Loughton Residents Association which would take place on Tuesday 15 March.

NR also stated that he would be arranging a meeting with the chairs of the District Development Control Committee and the Area Plans Committee South to determine which committee should consider the application.

It was almost certain that the application would not be ready to submit to either committee before the May elections.

Action: CP to report on further progress at the next meeting

3. New Depot at Oakwood Hill

CP provided an update on progress with detailed designs and costings for the new depot at Oakwood Hill, including discussions with the Chief Building Control Officer regarding areas of work that his staff may be able to assist with.

The group noted that it had not been possible to prepare a report for the March 2011 Cabinet on proposals and costs for taking the design and planning application stage forward and it seemed unlikely that all of the required information would be available in time for the April Cabinet.

Action: CP/MJT to produce a report for the earliest possible Cabinet meeting.

4. New Depot at North Weald

JG gave an update with progress. The ecological surveys for both sites had commenced and the report was expected to be available in mid March. The Utilities searches were also underway. The project lead officer has had discussions with Planning over the planning application requirements.

Access considerations for the site nearest to the control tower would need careful consideration. If the proposed access route was the same as used for the market traffic then all houses on the Crest Nicholson development were likely to be brought into the planning application consultation process. An alternative access point by turning right from Merlin Way into the main gate entrance was being looked at.

Whilst both sites were being worked up it appeared that the planners preference was the site on the airfield because of the smaller building footprint.

JG also reported that SITA had expressed some concerns about the permanency of the North Weald Depot and were investigating whether they could find their own site. The group were reminded that if SITA were to operate from their own site it would significantly increase the contract costs.

Action : JG to report on further progress at the next meeting.

5. Pyrles Lane Nursery Site

CP reported that the outline design scheme was not available for consideration at the meeting because of delays in receiving services search information. The outline design was expected to be available for the next meeting.

NR referred to one objection already received in planning despite the fact that a planning application had not yet been submitted. The group also noted that an enquiry had been received from Eleanor Laing MP which had been answered without follow up.

Action: John Hayes to be invited to present his design layout at the next meeting.

6. Torrington Drive Development Site Loughton

CP reported that a meeting had been held last week between the Council's consultants, Savills and Stobart to attempt to move this development forward.

However as Stobart's financial interest in the redevelopment had reduced they were reluctant to proceed at this time.

Savills advice was to try and persuade Stobart to take their site to the market along with the BP Garage site to test the market for interest from a third party developer.

CP advised the group that the Council may have to forego some of its development profit to make the scheme work.

The group were also reminded that because of the lack of progress with the redevelopment proposals it would be difficult to object to an application by BP, if they served appropriate notice on the Council, for a renewal of their lease of the petrol filling station site. In this sense time was of the essence in making progress.

The group considered whether specialist legal advice should be sought to ascertain whether there were sufficient grounds for refusing a lease renewal application.

A report to the North Weald Airfield and Assets Management Cabinet Committee would be prepared advising members of the situation.

Action: CP/COB to seek specialist legal advice regarding the lease renewal issues;

7. St John's Road/Epping Depot Site

NR gave an update provided by the Town Centres Manager who appeared to be the lead officer for this project. Most of the required work had now been completed in preparation for the public consultation on the four options. There continued to be unresolved highways issues. Urban Practitioners had been

asked for a full explanation and breakdown of their 13 days activity on this project, particularly in relation to the lack of progress on highways matters, as their claim to have in house highways expertise was one of the deciding factors in their appointment.

It was likely that further cost would be incurred to resolve outstanding highways issues.

CP reported that there was an unconfirmed report that Essex County Council had received an unconditional offer for their site from a residential developer.

The group expressed their ongoing concern at the lack of progress on this important project and the Acting Chief Executive asked for a further detailed progress report to be made to the next ordinary meeting of the Management Board.

Action: John Preston to be asked to provide a detailed progress report to the next ordinary meeting of Management Board.

8. Improvement East Asset Management Project

The group considered an executive summary of a report produced by Improvement East following a cross County multi agency review into asset management.

It was noted that whilst Epping Forest was included as one of the participants in the project, because of resource capacity issues to be able comply with unrealistic project timescales the Council had not made any contribution to the project.

DM reported that the report was due to be discussed at a meeting of Essex Chief Executives and Senior members later in the week. It was noted that the report and its conclusions had not found universal favour amongst Essex local authorities.

Action: That the report be referred for discussion to the next joint Management Board/Cabinet meeting.

9. Merlin Way North Weald – Residential Development Site

AH reported that Cabinet had decided that this site should be sold on the open market and that as only 10 houses would be provided there should be no affordable housing element. AH had therefore referred the matter back to Estates and Valuation to pursue.

Home Housing Association had been advised of the decision and were clearly disappointed with the outcome given the amount of work they had devoted to the project. Whilst the issue of abortive work costs had not arisen and would not be raised by the Council, this might arise.

CP felt that market conditions did not favour an immediate sale and the timing of the disposal was something that should be discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Legal and Estates.

AH suggested that it would be advisable to obtain an updated outline planning application prior to disposal.

The group also considered linking asset disposals to a financial profile possibly over a three to four year period that would indicate the financial years in which capital receipts would be most beneficial.

Action: (1) TB/CP to work up a financial profile for 3/4 year period for key asset realisation.

(2) That the timing for marketing this site be reconsidered following the production of the financial profile referred to in (1) above.

(3) TB/CP to submit a progress report to the next meeting.

10. Merlin Way Business Park

The site is being held in abeyance as estimated profitability is marginal at this time.

11. Winston Churchill Public House Site

CP reported that the developer in a recent conversation had stated that he was not confident in bringing forward a financially viable scheme at the present time.

CP suggested that a way forward might be to look at an alternative scheme whereby all the proposed residential units would be sold at full market price with the developer making a financial payment to the Council to recognise the surrender of the existing long ground lease and the granting of a new long ground lease.

To comply with the Council policy on affordable housing it was suggested that this element of the development scheme could be provided at an alternative site.

Some concerns were suggested at the potential precedent this might create for future residential development sites.

The group felt however that this was a key site in the longer term redevelopment plans for the Broadway redevelopment and as such all possibilities should be explored.

Action: CP to explore idea in principle and report back to a future meeting.

12. Cartersfield Road Waltham Abbey

It was noted that the leasehold interest in the OEP factory and warehouse site had been assigned and the Council had recovered all accrued rent and rates arrears amounting £118,150 plus reimbursement of £2506, 50% of the cost of emergency works carried out by the Council.

13. The Broadway Car Parks/Burton Road Depot Site

AH reported that there had been no progress since the last meeting.

Action: AH to produce report to Management Board and Cabinet.

14. Town Mead Depot Site

CP reported that Peter Brett Associates had submitted a proposal to progress the site with a fee estimate but did not provide an example of a site designated with flood plain zone 3a that had been developed.

CP was pressing the company for a reference site to demonstrate their capability to achieve agreed schemes within the flood plain zoning.

15. Former Red Cross Hall Site Roundhills Waltham Abbey

AH confirmed that a report would be considered by the Cabinet at this evenings meeting recommending that the site be developed for affordable housing in conjunction with a Housing Association.

16. Church Hill Former Car Park Site Loughton

COB reported that she had consulted with the Portfolio Holder for Legal and Estates as to the future of this site who had confirmed that the site should be kept available pending the final decision on the BP site at the Broadway.

17. Difficult to let Garage Sites

No progress reported at this meeting.

Action: AH to report back when review completed.

18. Public Toilets

CP informed the group of a proposal his section had been working on to demolish the public toilets in the Bakers Lane Car Park to be replaced by a retail catering outlet who as part of lease arrangements would make the toilet facilities available for public use. This would achieve a saving to both Epping Town Council and the District Council in terms of the ongoing maintenance of the toilet facilities.

Epping Town Council had been consulted about the idea and in principle were not opposed.

Under the proposal the existing superloo also situated at Bakers Lane would be relocated to Buckhurst Hill to replace the toilet unit there, the lease of which was due to expire on 29 September 2012

Notice would need to be served on the company that the lease would not be renewed and it was established that this could be carried out by the Director of Corporate Support Services under delegated authority.

More work on the scheme needed to be done but the views of the group were sought to the principle before proceeding further.

There were no dissenting views to the principle.

Action: COB to serve notice terminating the existing lease agreement in respect of the toilet facility at Buckhurst Hill.

19. Date for Next Meeting

To be arranged for early May following the district elections.

Action: COB to ask Frances Ball to arrange.