

Minutes of a Lowestoft Shared Accommodation Joint Committee meeting held on
Monday 19 August 2013 at 4.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lowestoft

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Suffolk County Council Members present:

Councillors C Noble (Cabinet Member) and M Ladd

Waveney District Council Members present:

Councillors M Barnard (Cabinet Member) and G Douce

Officers present:

A McFarlane (WDC Director of Resources)
P Revell (Programme Director)
B Prettyman (SCC Corporate Property)
D Lee (WDC Democratic Services Manager)

Others in attendance

T Price – LSI Architects (in relation to Agenda Item 4)

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. LOWESTOFT SHARED ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME - PROGRESS AND UPDATE REPORT

The Programme Director presented a progress and update report on the Lowestoft Shared Accommodation Programme including a summary of key activities and decisions made since the last meeting, key milestones, financial information and risks.

Programme Updates

Progress had been made in the following key areas:

- A pre-planning consultation event was held on 3 June 2013. A total of 11 people attended, all offering positive comments. No formal responses were received.
- Very positive consultation events had been held with internal and external disability representatives on 17 June 2013 and on 14 August 2013. Regular future sessions had been programmed in order to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the needs of disabled staff and visitors were achieved. Valuable feedback had been received in particular on the toilet facilities, break-out and access areas, all of which had influenced design discussions.

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- The planning application for the project was submitted on 20 June 2013. It was anticipated that the application would be considered by the Development Control Committee in September 2013.
- Procurement of the main contractor for the construction of the Riverside Road site had been completed on programme. Kier Construction, the successful bidder, has since been appointed. They were now working closely with the Design Team to develop the details of the design, construction programme and construction costs.
- The design and construction programme had been amended to reflect efficiencies in programme delivery, the completion date for which was unaffected.
- Fortnightly meetings were being held between the Riverside Road Design Team and key client workstreams to maintain and update the Employers Requirements documentation. This document was in its fourth iteration and would control the final design of the building.
- The results of the pre-move Workplace Wellbeing Survey were being evaluated with a view to providing communication back to staff.
- It was reported that as a result of some concerns raised by staff (regarding the Marina Centre in particular), some improvements were being considered to existing buildings, which may involve some relocation and / or adaption of current office accommodation.
- The Joint Management Group had approved the design development to date in order that the planning submission could be made and the design work could continue. This included the form of the building, orientation of the site, basic layout and the proposed elevations and materials.
- It had been agreed that Eastern Facilities Management Services (EFMS) would initially take on the joint management of the buildings via an extension of the arrangements currently in place in all Suffolk County Council (SCC) corporate buildings. This would enable the levels of service required in the brand new building to be fully assessed and agreed over a 12 – 24 month period, prior to the undertaking of a tender exercise.
- Concertus Ltd had been appointed to carry out the early feasibility work for the refurbishment of the Marina Centre. Early employers requirements workshops had been held and a report was expected shortly.
- The land transfer of both the Riverside Road site and the Marina Centre had been agreed and was in the process of being completed.

The Chairman invited Mr Price of LSI Architects to present a computerised 3D module of the proposed new office space and buildings, during which the Joint Committee had the opportunity to ask questions.

Details of the key activities for the forthcoming period and key milestone dates were detailed in the report. It was reported that some preparatory works could be undertaken on the site by the end of the year.

Programme Finance

The programme budget was £13.65m – split equally between the two authorities (£6.85meach).

The latest estimate for out-turn costs remained within the perimeters of the allocated budget, having taken account of the apportionments made to-date. Current programme expenditure stood at £230.7k as at 31 July 2013.

Programme Risks

The Programme Risk Register was monitored by the Programme Director and reviewed at each Joint Management Group meeting. Any risks deemed as high were given special attention and appropriate actions put in place. It was reported that there were currently 23 open risks, all of which had mitigation strategies in place. None of the risks were categorised as 'high'.

During the discussion on this item the following issues were raised:

- Clarification was sought as to whether the wood-effect cladding on the outside of the building was a little bland and whether it would be possible to introduce greener elements, such as a 'green wall'. In response, it was reported that there would be signage erected on the cladding which would reduce the visual surface area of the cladding. In addition, green walls were expensive to install and maintain and given the budgetary implications, it was considered better to address the overall sustainability of the building.
- It was reported that the structure of the building would be comprised of robust materials that took into account the marine environment it would be situated in, with a life span of 60 years. This would include aluminium panelling to the exterior of the building which would need no maintenance (other than window cleaning).
- Confirmation was given that there would be no dedicated Members Room within the new complex but the cellular meeting rooms and hot desking facilities would also be available for Councillors' use. This was considered to be more efficient in terms of useable office space and cut down on those areas that would only be used on an occasional basis.
- An assurance was sought that any contractors / sub-contractors would adhere to professional ethical standards and that no blacklisting activities would take place. Confirmation was given that part of the procurement process would involve analysis and due diligence and contractors who had been convicted of malpractice would not be appointed.
- It was reported that the response rate to the pre-move Workplace Wellbeing Survey of 50% was considered to be a good rate of response. In addition, all staff had been encouraged to complete the survey and whilst it had not been explicitly stated, staff members were able to complete the survey in work time and so did not have to do so in their own time. Confirmation was also given that the relevant trade unions were being consulted on proposals / working conditions etc.
- Confirmation was given that any existing facilities staff would be TUPE'd over to FMS and although it was not possible to say at the meeting how long any working conditions would last following a formal TUPE agreement, FMS were experienced in this kind of transfer and would follow the usual statutory requirements.
- Recognition was given to the need for the right level of IT infrastructure to be put in place at the outset. IT provision was being designed with flexibility in mind and whilst there would be some shared use / cabling, there would also be a need for separate access systems to address the use of various public service networks. Wireless networks would also be incorporated within the buildings allowing wifi access for both employees and the public. IT savings would also be achieved through the use of dedicated printing areas that both authorities could use. Past experience of integrating IT systems had been obtained in the building of West Suffolk House and so the key learning issues from this project could be considered for the Riverside Road project. A dedicated workstream was in place to address IT issues.

- It was reported that a phased move would be undertaken to transfer staff to the new building at the appropriate time. All staff would be given an induction / tour of the new building and each departmental team had dedicated Change Champions to assist in the transformation process.

RESOLVED

That the progress and update report be received.

5. LOWESTOFT SHARED ACCOMMODATION JOINT COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members considered a summary document setting out the Terms of Reference for the Lowestoft Shared Accommodation Joint Committee, the details from which had been taken from the Joint Agreement signed by both Suffolk County Council and Waveney District Council.

A minor typographical error was identified in the first paragraph under the heading 'Summary of Content' in that the word 'be' needed to be omitted so that sentence read – The co-opted non-Executive Member is not able to vote.

Clarification was given within the document that only the Cabinet Members on the Joint Committee could be the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman as for practical purposes, only these Members held voting rights.

With regard to the suggestion that a one page simplified guide could be produced for members of the public or those not accustomed to local authority meetings (including a seating plan) – it was considered that as this Joint Committee was only a small meeting comprised of only four Members and nameplates were provided, this would not be necessary.

RESOLVED

That the Terms of Reference for the Lowestoft Shared Accommodation Joint Committee be received.

6. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Joint Committee re-considered the Calendar of Meetings for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 municipal years.

It was reported that monthly meetings of the Joint Committee had been scheduled but it was considered that bi-monthly meetings would be more appropriate to make best use of resources and to meet the governance and decision-making arrangements for the Riverside Road project.

RESOLVED

That the revised Calendar of Meetings for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 municipal years be approved.

The meeting was concluded at 4.55 pm.

Chairman