

WELSH CHURCH ACT ESTATE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 18th January, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chairman); Councillor G.A. Cox (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. J.E. Charles, Mrs. P. Drake, K.P. Mahoney and S.T. Wiliam.

Also Present: Councillor R.A. Penrose.

347 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”.

348 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 28th September, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

349 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor M.R. Wilson declared an interest in Agenda Items 8 and 11, ‘Land off Myrtle Close, Penarth’ (Part I and Part II). The nature of the interest was that the Councillor was the Member for Stanwell Ward and a Member of the Planning Committee. The Councillor disconnected from and vacated the meeting before the agenda items were discussed, with the Vice-Chairman assuming Chairing responsibilities in his absence.

350 APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE 2020/21 (MD) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which advised that a budget of £46,500 had been set for issuing grants during 2020/21, and following the allocation of grants totalling £24,804 by Committee at the previous meeting, a remaining balance of £22,196 had yet to be allocated.

The report recommended the approval of grants to the value of £22,000, the full details of which were contained at Appendix A to the report. This left a balance of £196 to be carried over for allocation in 2021/22.

The Officer subsequently listed each grant application in turn, noting the purpose of the application, the amount requested, the grant that the Officer recommended be

allocated and the rationale thereof. In response to a query from Councillor Mahoney in respect of the National Coastwatch Institution's application for replacement binoculars (Application 4), the Officer confirmed that the applicant required high-grade binoculars and had provided two quotes to support their application.

Having fully considered each application it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the applications for grant assistance as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved.

Reason for decision

In furtherance of the objectives of the Trust.

351 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2019/20 (MD) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which set out the Annual Report and Accounts for the Trust for the year ending 31st March, 2020, with some minor presentational amendments having been made since the previous report following an Independent Examination carried out by Audit Wales.

The report recommended that the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 (which were attached at Appendix A to the report) be approved by the Trustees and the Chairman be authorised to sign the same on their behalf, in order that Audit Wales could add their signature and the documents be submitted to the Charity Commission before the end of the month.

The net value of the fund was unchanged from the value reported at the previous meeting, which at 31st March, 2020 was £4.969m, a reduction of £127k when compared to the previous year.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 be approved, and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the same on behalf of the Trustees.

Reason for decision

In accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, and the Charities (Accounts & Reports) Regulations 2008.

352 INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2020/21 (MD) –

Following an update from Investment Managers, Tilney Financial Planning Ltd, at the previous meeting held on 28th September, 2020, there had been some discussion amongst Trustees in respect of the performance and risk level of the Trust's fund, investment management fees and the ethical approach to investment, and it had been resolved that a benchmarking exercise be carried out in relation to the

investments held by other Welsh Church Act Estate Trusts and the management fees being paid in relation to these.

The Principal Accountant presented the report and advised Committee that following enquiries with other Welsh Church Act Estate Trusts it was clear that values of their funds varied in size and, as such, treatments of these funds varied significantly. The Trust currently held £1.845m in investments, and its portfolio was invested on a 'Risk Level 3' in accordance with the summary of Investment Risk Strategies which was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The report also set out a proposal that Link Asset Management undertake an initial high level review of the current investment management arrangements which would outline some alternative options for the Trust to consider going forward.

Discussion ensued, and Members expressed views and raised queries which could be summarised as follows:

- While there were benefits to the pooling of resources (for instance with other funds or Local Authorities) there were clear risks, as had been demonstrated by Local Authorities elsewhere, and it was important that the Trust maintained control of their own fund;
- It was queried whether the Trust should consider a total investment strategy wherein the question of profit was removed. At present, once the target income of £40k was achieved any remainder went into capital growth, and the Officer advised she had asked Link Asset Management to consider as part of their review whether this split was appropriate;
- It would be interesting to have more detail regarding the levels of interest being earned by other Welsh Church Act Estate Trusts.

There being no further comments or queries it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T some additional advice from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, Link Asset Management, be requested with a further report regarding next steps concerning the investment strategy to be presented to Committee in due course.

Reason for decision

To enable the Committee to carry out a more detailed review of the investment management arrangements and Committee's approach to risk and socially responsible investments.

353 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT SITE REVIEW REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS FOR GLEBE FIELDS (MD) –

The Operational Manager for Property presented the report, which provided an update to Committee on the work undertaken by the Planning Department on the Development Site Review Report for Glebe Fields since the last Committee meeting,

which had now been finalised and was attached at Appendix A to the Part II report on the same agenda, at which point it would be discussed in further detail.

The Chairman invited Councillor Penrose, not a Member of the Committee but with permission to speak, to address Committee as a trustee of Sully and Lavernock Community Library Trust, a party with an interest in the site who had previously presented to Committee, and had submitted an offer for 2 acres of the site in question. The Councillor began by thanking the Chairman for allowing him to address Committee, and proceeded by stating that as time had lapsed since the Library Trust had expressed interest, he wished to reiterate the original expression of their interest to Committee.

The Councillor advised that the Library Trust wished to purchase the Glebe Fields site on behalf of a Community Interest Company which would be owned by the people of Sully, with the intention of building an extension to Sully Library, a doctors' surgery, a car park and 25 retirement bungalows. It was proposed that the Library Trust buy the land at its agricultural price under an overage agreement, wherein if planning permission were to be obtained, the Welsh Church Act Estate Trust would receive an uplift in price. The Councillor also noted that due to the Cog housing development, the requirement for affordable housing in Sully would be exceeded, whereas there remained a need for retirement bungalows amongst the community.

There being no comments or queries from Members, Councillor Penrose concluded his address to the Committee and thanked them for their time.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted and considered so that a decision on the matter could be taken under Part II of the Committee agenda.

Reason for decision

To enable a decision to be made under Part II of the agenda.

N.B. Councillor R.A. Penrose, having addressed Committee under Part I of the agenda, subsequently disconnected from the meeting and did not observe any subsequent Part II agenda items.

354 LAND OFF MYRTLE CLOSE, PENARTH (MD) –

The Operational Manager for Property presented the report, which advised Committee of an enquiry relating to its land off Myrtle Close, Penarth and to seek instructions in respect of a suitable response and way forward. Details of the enquiry were contained in the Part II report on the same agenda, at which point it would be discussed in further detail.

With there being no comment from Members at this time, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted and considered so that a decision on the matter could be taken under Part II of the Committee agenda.

Reason for decision

To enable a decision to be made under Part II of the agenda.

355 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

356 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT SITE REVIEW REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS FOR GLEBE FIELDS (MD) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12 AND 14) –

The Operational Manager and the Senior Planner presented the report which provided an update to Committee on the work undertaken by the Planning Department on the Development Site Review Report for Glebe Fields since the last Committee meeting in September, 2020, and to seek instructions from the Trust in terms of an appropriate way forward.

With the Senior Planner having given a comprehensive presentation of the report's contents and work undertaken by the Planning Department, discussion ensued, with Members asking Officers for guidance regarding the appropriate options available to the Trust in relation to this matter. Having given full consideration to the contents of the report and Officers' guidance it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the update and Development Site Review Report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Operational Manager for Property be instructed to appoint a suitable consultant to provide an Agricultural Land Classification survey.
- (3) T H A T delegated authority be given to the Operational Manager Property, in consultation with the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee Chairman and the Operational Manager for Accountancy, to agree the consultancy costs associated with the appointment referred to in Resolution (2) above.
- (4) T H A T a further update report be brought to Committee for their consideration when the results of the Agricultural Land Classification survey were available.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To ensure that the Trustees were updated on the contents of the Development Site Review Report.
- (2) In order that a fully informed decision in respect of the future of the land could be taken by Committee.
- (3) In order to progress the appointments in a timely manner.
- (4) In order to keep Committee updated at the appropriate time.

357 LAND OFF MYRTLE CLOSE, PENARTH (MD) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12 AND 14) –

The Operational Manager for Property presented the report, which advised that the Trust owned a parcel of land near Cogan Hall Farm, off Myrtle Close, Penarth, which measured approximately 4.7 acres. An email had recently been received which asked whether the Trust had any intention to market or dispose of the land, and the Officer sought Committee's instructions on a suitable way forward. The location of the land could be seen on a plan which was at Appendix A to the report, and numerous photographs of the site were shared with Members.

Following the Officer's presentation, discussion ensued, with Members asking Officers for guidance regarding the appropriate options available to the Trust in relation to this matter. Having given full consideration to the contents of the report and Officers' guidance it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the enquiry received be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Operational Manager for Property be instructed to:
 - Appoint a "Qualified Surveyor" to provide further advice;
 - Respond to the enquiring party advising that the Trust were considering options for the site and could not confirm further details regarding future decisions at this stage; and
 - Engage with all known owners of the land surrounding the site regarding access options.
- (3) T H A T delegated authority be given to the Operational Manager Property, in consultation with the Welsh Church Act Estate Committee Vice-Chairman and the Operational Manager for Accountancy to agree the consultancy costs associated with the appointment referred to in Resolution (2) above.
- (4) T H A T a further update report be brought to Committee for their consideration in due course.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) In order for the enquiry to be considered and a suitable response provided.
- (2) In order to obtain the required professional advice in line with Charity Law and ensure that all relative parties are consulted regarding further parties.
- (3) In order to progress the appointments in a timely manner.
- (4) In order to keep Committee updated of progress in relation to the matter.