

FARMS ESTATE COMMITTEE

28 April 2016

Present:-

County Councillors

Councillors C Chugg (Chairman), G Gribble (Vice-Chair), J Brook, A Dewhirst, R Julian and R Rowe

Co-opted Members:-

C Latham (Tenants Representative)

Apologies:-

Councillors J Berry

* **1** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 and 22 February be signed as correct records.

* **2** **Pollinators and Neonicotinoids (Cabinet Minute *13, 13 April 2016)**

(Councillor Hook attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) and spoke to this item in support of the action now proposed).

The Committee noted that the Cabinet had on 13 April 2016 asked this Committee for its view on prohibiting *'the use of neonicotinoids on land under the control or ownership of the County Council including existing and new tenants of the County Farms Estate'* as part of a wider Pollinators Action Plan, the production of which had been agreed, in principle, with a decision on the final content of the Plan to be determined by Cabinet in light of this Committee's views.

The Committee also considered the Joint Report of the Head of Planning Transportation and Environment and Head of Business Strategy and Support (PTE/16/22) setting out the relevant issues appertaining to the Farms Estate in more detail.

Whilst there might be practical implications of using alternative insecticides, including costs, the Tenants' Representative confirmed that to the best of his knowledge there was limited use, if any, of neonicotinoids within the Estate. Its use in the main was on oil seed rape and maize which was not, in the case of the former, grown by any of the current tenants. Maize was grown on the Estate particularly by dairy tenants. These insecticides were, apparently, only available under licence which he further understood was not easily obtained, presumably in light of current concerns nationally. Overall he felt that prohibiting the use of neonicotinoids would make little difference to the operation of the Estate but agreed it was important to undertake the pending consultation so that a better understanding of the facts could be ascertained before any decisions on the future use or otherwise of currently legally permitted neonics is made.

The Head of Business Strategy and Support reminded the Committee of the legal arrangement that existed between the County Council and existing tenants noting that the County Council could not unilaterally and retrospectively prevent existing tenants from using otherwise legally available insecticides including neonics.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst, **SECONDED** by Councillor Brook and

RESOLVED

(a) that a tenants' survey be undertaken, urgently, to better understand the use of neonicotinoids on the County Farms Estate and while the survey is being carried out the opportunity be taken to gain up-to-date information that may help inform a stage 1 feasibility study into the potential for anaerobic digestion energy production on the Estate;

(b) that the results of the survey be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee to be held now on Tuesday 28 June 2016 at 10.00am (instead of 26 July 2016) in order that the future use of legally permitted neonicotinoids on the Estate can be discussed and a response made to the Cabinet at its meeting on 13 July 2016;

(c) that potential positive opportunities be explored to address pollination issues on the County Farms Estate through the Pollinators Action Plan for presentation to Cabinet, in line with the objectives of the Farms Estate Strategic Review.

* **3** **Revenue Budget 2015/16 (Provisional Outturn) and 2016/17 Budget**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/16/46) on the County Farms Estate Revenue Monitoring (Provisional Outturn) Statement 2015/16 and draft Revenue Budget 2016/17, noting that:

(a) the target surplus for 2015/16 was now set at £337,000, with provisional outturn figures showing a net surplus of £325,000; and

(b) the draft budget for 2016/17 included a revised target surplus of £362,000.

* **4** **Capital Monitoring 2015/16 (Provisional Outturn) and draft Capital Programme 2016/17**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/16/47) on the County Farms Estate Capital Monitoring 2015/16 (Provisional Outturn) and draft Capital Programme 2016/17, noting that:

(a) the provisional outturn stood at £1,284,000, out of a capital programme for 2015/16 of £2,074,000;

(b) there was a net underspend of £19,000, **after** allowing for slippage to 2016/17 of £771,000;

(c) the approved Capital Programme for 2016/17 included schemes totalling £1,671,000.

* **5** **Management and Restructuring Issues**

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS/16/06) on County Farms Estate management and restructuring issues.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor Gribble and

RESOLVED

(a) Land at Combefishacre Farm, Ipplepen

that 11.18 hectares or thereabouts of land at Combefishacre Farm, Ipplepen be advertised to let in internal competition between the tenants of Bulleigh Elms Farm, Ipplepen; Lomans Farm, Broadhempston; Fairfield Farm, Denbury; Coppa Dolla Farm; Denbury and Buckridge

Farm, Denbury on a five year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017, subject to terms being agreed;

(b) Higher Leigh Farm, Churchstow

(i) that the house buildings and 86.14 acres or thereabouts of land comprising Higher Leigh Farm, Churchstow be advertised to let to new entrants in the open market on a seven year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017 and terminating 25 March 2024 and as a mixed livestock enterprise expressly precluding the milking of dairy cows, subject to terms being agreed; and

(ii) that the additional 23.13 acres of adjoining land known as Part Combe Royal be let to the new tenant of Higher Leigh Farm under a consecutive series of 12 month Farm Business Tenancy Agreements, subject to terms being agreed, until such times as any development potential can be realised;

(c) Lower Chitterley Farm, Bickleigh

(i) that the tenant's early surrender of his Farm Business Tenancy of Lower Chitterley Farm, Bickleigh, effective 25 March 2017, be accepted by the landlord;

(ii) that in the first instance the house buildings and 149.91 acres or thereabouts of land comprising Lower Chitterley Farm, Bickleigh be advertised to let internally to existing tenants as a potential progression opportunity on a Farm Business Tenancy for a term of up to fifteen years commencing 25 March 2017, subject to terms being agreed; and

(iii) that should no existing tenants apply for or be offered a tenancy of Lower Chitterley Farm, Bickleigh the house buildings and 149.91 acres or thereabouts of land be advertised to let to new entrants in the open market on a seven year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017 and terminating 25 March 2024, subject to terms being agreed;

(d) Lomans Farm, Broadhempston

that the offer from a neighbouring special purchaser be accepted and that 0.012 ha of Part OS 4115 be declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate and sold.

* **6** **Actions taken under delegated powers**

The Committee noted the actions taken by the Chairman of the Cabinet and the Head of Business Strategy and Support, in accordance with Part 3 of the County Council's Constitution.

* **7** **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to, and which was likely to reveal the identity of, tenants and information relating to the financial or business affairs of tenants and the County Council and, in accordance with Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

* **8** **Holdings and Tenancies etc.**

(An item taken under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during which the press and public were excluded, no representations having been received to such

consideration under Regulation 5(5) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.)

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS/16/07) on requests for landlord's consent to tenants' proposed improvements.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor Gribble and

RESOLVED

(a) New Form Farm, Rockbeare

that landlord's consent be granted for a 60' x 30' and 12' to eaves painted steel portal framed general purpose shed with stoned apron for machinery and general storage at New Ford Farm, Rockbeare subject to the physical improvement being written down in value to £100 on a straight line basis over a life expectancy of 25 years;

(b) Topshayes Farm, Aylesbeare

that landlord's consent be granted for a 105' x 30' and 14' to eaves painted steel portal framed general purpose storage and calf rearing shed to replace two life expired tenants' timber frame and clad buildings at Topshayes Farm, Aylesbeare subject to the physical improvement being written down in value to £100 on a straight line basis over 10 years (this shortened write down period being a direct requirement of the head landlord).

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 3.15 pm