

## FARMS ESTATE COMMITTEE

28 June 2016

Present:-

County Councillors

Councillors C Chugg (Chairman), J Brook, A Dewhirst, R Julian, R Rowe and J Yabsley

Co-opted Members:-

C Bellew (Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs) and C Latham (Tenants Representative)

\* 9

**Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2016 be signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Minute \*8(a) to read "*New Ford Farm, Rockbeare*".

\* 10

**Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

\* 11

**Revenue Monitoring 2016/17 (Month 2) and Revenue Monitoring (Final Outturn) 2015/16**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/16/62) on the County Farms Estate Revenue Monitoring 2016/17 (Month 2) and Revenue Monitoring (Final Outturn) 2015/16. Members noted that for the 2016/17 financial year and as a result of insurance budgets being centralised, the target surplus had been revised to £362,000. The Final Outturn for 2015/16 remained unchanged and showed a net surplus of £325,000 compared to the target surplus of £337,000.

\* 12

**Capital Monitoring 2015/16 (Final Outturn) and Capital Monitoring (Month 2) 2016/17**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/16/63) on the County Farms Estate Capital Monitoring 2015/16 (Final Outturn) and Capital Monitoring (Month 2) 2016/17, noting that:

(a) the Final Outturn at 2015/16 remained unchanged showing expenditure of £1,284,000 and scheme slippage of £771,000, and a net underspend of £19,000 against the capital programme of £2,074,000.

(b) the approved Capital Programme for 2016/17 totalled £1,671,000 which together with scheme slippage of £771,000 for 2015/16 would result in capital spending of £2,442,000 in 2016/17.

\* 13

**The County Farms Estate - Annual Report 2015/16**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/16/64) incorporating the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the County Farms Estate.

The Annual Report 2015/16 covered the Committee's functions and financial and Estate management performance and highlighted notable Estate achievements and events.

\* **14**      **Management and Restructuring Issues**

*(Councillor Yabsley declared a personal interest in “(a) Beara Down Farm, Bratton Fleming” by virtue of being a member of the North Devon Council Planning Committee).*

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS16/09) on County Farms Estate management and restructuring issues.

**(a) Beara Down Farm, Bratton Fleming (Minute \*FE/128, 9 February 2012)**

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

**RESOLVED**

(i) that the Beara Down farmhouse, buildings and some land extending in total to 15.84 acres or thereabouts and more particularly described as OS 9089 and Pt's OS 7200, 9793 and 0005 be relet on a further Farm Business Tenancy Agreement to the existing tenant for a term commencing 25 March 2017 and expiring 25 March 2018, subject to terms being agreed;

(ii) that the 26.05 acres of land or thereabouts forming part Beara Down Farm and more particularly described as OS 0800, 0805, 1500, 3122, 4425 and 5625 be relet on a further Farm Business Tenancy Agreement to the existing tenant for a term commencing 25 March 2017 and expiring 25 March 2024, subject to terms being agreed.

**(b) Land at Combefishacre Farm, Ipplepen (Minute \*FE/5(a), 28 April 2016)**

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Julian, **SECONDED** by Councillor Yabsley, and

**RESOLVED** that the 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; Buckridge Farm, Denbury and Cobberton Farm, Dartington on a five year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017, subject to terms being agreed.

\* **15**      **Pollinators and Neonicotinoids (Cabinet Minute \*13, 13 April 2016)**

*[NB In line with the spirit of the Council's Public Participation Scheme and at the invitation of the Committee a Mr Hartfield (NFU) attended and spoke to this item in support of the view that there was no evidence to support prohibiting the use of neonicotinoids.]*

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS/16/11), which set out the findings of the County Farms Estate tenants' questionnaire on the use of neonic pesticides on the Estate.

The Committee noted that the Cabinet on 13 April 2016 had previously asked this Committee for its view on potentially 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.

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

**RESOLVED**

(a) that Cabinet be advised:

(i) that there is currently limited use of neonics on the County Farm Estate;

- (ii) that a prohibition on new tenants using neonics would have limited benefit;
- (iii) that training opportunities for tenants on alternative means of pest control such as Integrated Pest Management Plans should be promoted;
- (iv) that tenants should be encouraged to sign up to the Devon Pollinator Pledge, which has been endorsed by the National Farmers' Union;
- (v) that the Estate should be used to implement the initiatives set out in the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS/16/11), namely:

- (A) *Tenants be encouraged to sign up to the Devon Pollinators Pledge to:*
  - (1) *plant bee-friendly flowers. Flowers (including on shrubs and trees) provide nectar and pollen;*
  - (2) *create and protect meadows and other areas rich in wild flowers. In gardens sow an area with wildflower seed, leave it to flower and set seed before cutting;*
  - (3) *leaving wild corners, dead wood, walls and grassy banks undisturbed over winter to provide shelter. Leave an area to grow wild and build a 'bug hotel' in your garden;*
  - (4) *think carefully about whether to use pesticides especially where pollinators are active or nesting or where plants are in flower. Only use pesticides if absolutely necessary;*
  - (5) *join up and learn more. Support one of the many conservation organisations campaigning for, and conserving, our wildlife in Devon;*
- (B) *Identify and promote and/or develop new best practice case studies demonstrating how the Estate is used to support pollinators;*
- (C) *Identify and promote training opportunities around alternative means of pest control such as Integrated Pest Management Plans;*
- (D) *Promote voluntary measures such as those set out in the Campaign for the Farmed Environment;*
- (E) *Identify County Farms more likely to be eligible for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) and discuss the merits of an application with the tenants, particularly in the two Facilitation Fund Project areas of the Avon Valley and Torridge Headwaters;*
- (F) *Identify and encourage good environmental management of County farms falling within a County Wildlife Site;*
- (G) *Identify and promote the use of alternative non neonic pesticides used on maize, wheat, barley and winter forage crops.*

(b) that the Cabinet should also invite/support further research/investigation into the science of neonic pesticide use.

\* 16

**Bicton College - Update from Dr Phil Le Grice, Principal of Bicton College**

The Chairman indicated, with the support of Members present, that Dr Le Grice would be invited to attend the next meeting.

\* 17 **Future Meetings**

**RESOLVED** that an additional meeting be held on Thursday 15 September 2016 at 10.30am.

\* 18 **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.

\* 19 **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)*

*(Councillor Yabsley declared a personal interest in “(a) Middle Yeo Farm, Down St Mary” by virtue of family connections).*

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support (BSS/16/10) on requests for landlord’s consent to tenants’ proposed improvements.

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

**RESOLVED**

**(a) Middle Yeo Farm, Down St Mary**

that landlord’s consent be granted for a 60’ x 40’ and 15’ to eaves galvanised steel portal framed general purpose shed with concrete apron at Middle Yeo Farm, Down St Mary 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) North Hele Farm, Buckland Brewer**

that landlord’s consent be granted for a 60’ x 22’ painted steel portal framed cubicle shed for up to 32 cows at North Hele Farm, Buckland Brewer subject to the physical improvement being written down in value to £100 on a straight line basis over a life expectancy of 20 years;

**(c) Markhams Farm, Ide**

that landlord’s consent be granted for a 60’ x 30’ and 15’ to eaves galvanised steel portal frame extension to the landlord’s cubicle shed and covered feed yard and constructing a 70’ x 30’ and 15’ to eaves galvanised steel portal framed covered feed yard at Markhams Farm, Ide subject to the physical improvement being written down in value to £100 on a straight line basis over a life expectancy of 25 years.

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

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.03 am