

FARMS ESTATE COMMITTEE

27 September 2021

Present:-

Councillors J Yabsley (Chair), J Brook (Vice-Chair), J Berry, A Dewhirst, L Samuel, C Whitton and L Warner

Apologies:-

Councillors H Gent

* **1** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 June 2021 and 31 August 2021 be signed as correct records.

* **2** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

3 **The Veterans Farm-Able Foundation**

Mr J Hibbard, the Chief Executive of the Veterans Farm-Able Foundation, attended and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee.

The Veterans Farm-Able Foundation was an eight-year old independent Charity based in Devon that looked after military veterans. The Charity provided agricultural and horticultural therapies to help improve physical mental health wellbeing and also to help guide some veterans who wanted an introduction into farming. The benefits of working with nature and with animals was well proven.

There were two million veterans currently in the UK, the highest proportion being in the South West and 100,000 in Devon, the majority being young men aged between 18 and 30.

The Charity was currently working with a number of veterans, supporting them in dealing with the impact of trauma, particularly PTSD and land mine injuries. The Charity also supported exclusive women's projects that took place in a safe, supportive environment.

The Charity were looking for a permanent base, to work with farmers and landowners in a similar way to the Apricot Centre, Totnes. Ideally, they would be looking for a smallholding of around 2-3 acres with possible farmhouse and

outbuildings situate between Exeter and Plymouth. The security of a base would improve the Charity's ability to apply for grant funding.

It was the Charity's wish to open discussions with the County Farms Estate and to explore possible opportunities.

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

RESOLVED that the County Farms Estate Land Agent explore possibilities and report back to a future Committee.

* **4** **Revenue Monitoring (Month 5) 2021/22**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/21/83) on the County Farms Estate Revenue Monitoring (Month 5) 2021/22, noting the target surplus of £464,000 and providing a summary of the annual budget and detailing income and expenditure to date.

Of particular note was the one-off licence fee of £25,000 included in the additional income which was being ring fenced for commissioning consultants to commence calculating the base line net carbon footprint of individual farm businesses and the estate as a whole.

* **5** **Capital Monitoring (Month 5) 2021/22**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/21/84) on the County Farms Estate Capital Monitoring (Month 5) 2021/22, noting that the approved capital programme for 2021/22 was £1,215,019.

There was a typographical error in paragraph 2.2 of the report where the forecast spend for 2021/22 should read £17,339 and not £152,946.

The Farms Estate intended to submit bids for additional funding, as part of the Council's medium term capital program, and the value of those bids would be brought to the November meeting.

* **6** **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.

7 Holdings, Tenancies etc

a Management and Restructuring

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support (BSS/21/07) on management and restructuring issues.

(a) Part New Ford Farm, Rockbeare

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

RESOLVED that approval be given to the commencement of subject to contract and planning negotiations with a solar farm developer with a view to granting:

- (i) an option agreement for a solar park development lease of 38.54 acres or thereabouts of land at Rockbeare; and
- (ii) a solar park development lease of the 38.54 acres or thereabouts of land at Rockbeare for a term of up to 40 years, provided that the revenue generated by the proposed solar farm lease be retained by the County Farm Estate.

(b) Lower Northchurch Farm, Yarnscombe

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

RESOLVED that endorsement be given to possession proceedings for Lower Northchurch Farm, Yarnscombe being concluded and that in due course the holding be advertised to let on the open market as a new entrant opportunity and on a Farm Business Tenancy for a term of up to seven years, all subject to terms being agreed.

b Request for Landlord's Consent for proposed Tenant's Improvements

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support (BSS/21/08) on a request for landlord's consent for proposed tenant's improvement.

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

RESOLVED that landlord's consent be granted for the tenant of Westcott Farm, Burlescombe to construct a 90' x 30' x 17' to eaves steel portal frame general purpose shed for the storage of hay and other consumables, subject to the improvement being written down in value to £100 on a straight line basis over a life expectancy of 20 years if the steel work is painted or 25 years if the steel work is galvanised.

c **Outstanding Debts**

(Councillor Samuel declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of knowing the person named in the Report.)

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support (CT/21/85) on outstanding debts.

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

RESOLVED that procedures for writing-off the bad debt of £40,461 be commenced, as referred to in Report CT/21/85.

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

The Meeting started at 2.16 pm and finished at 3.15 pm