

FARMS ESTATE COMMITTEE

13 May 2024

Present:-

Councillors J Yabsley (Chair), J Brook (Vice-Chair), J Berry, R Chesterton, A Dewhirst, C Whitton and Mrs L Warner (Tenants' representative)

Apologies:-

Councillors H Gent

* **126** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 February 2024 and 7 March 2024 be signed as correct records.

* **127** **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members they should declare any interests they may have in any item to be considered, prior to any discussion taking place on that item. The details of District and or Town and Parish Twin Hatters is on the attached list: [A list of county councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors](#).

* **128** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **129** **Revenue Monitoring (final Outturn) 2023/24 and 2024/25 (Budget)**

The Committee received the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DF/24/57) on the County Farms Estate Revenue Monitoring (Final Outturn) 2023/24 and 2024/25 (Budget), which provided details of income and expenditure to year end at Appendix A and a summary of the annual budget at Appendix B.

The revenue outturn achieved throughout the year was a surplus of £529,134, a shortfall of £4,866 against the target surplus of £534,000.

Members' questions and discussion points included:

- the increase in NPS fees was as a result of an extremely busy year that had included a significant number of changes in tenancy and in dealing with end of tenancy valuations, as well as other lettings; and there had been much volatility since 2018;

- whether bringing the management of the farms estate in-house could achieve savings; and that the current contract with Norse had three years remaining with an option to extend for a further five, subject to review.

* **130** **Capital Monitoring (Final Outturn) 2023/24 and Capital (Budget) 2024/25**

The Committee received the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DF/24/58) on the County Farms Estate Capital Monitoring (Final Outturn) 2023/24 and Capital Budget 2024/25.

Total spend in 2023/24 amounted to £701,949 resulting in an underspend against the budget provision of £199,068 which would be carried forward to the 2024/25 budget.

Members' questions and discussion points included:

- questions relating to paragraph 5.1(f) and (g) of the report were deferred to Part II of the meeting due to reasons of confidentiality.
- bids for further capital for future years would be submitted later in the year, in competition with other front-line services;
- the Tenant's representative raised concern that the maintenance and repair of the estate properties should be kept up-to-date;
- that this year's work programme was in the process of being prepared;
- welcome the long term investment of the improved facilities to the estate properties.

* **131** **Annual Report 2023/24**

The Committee received the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DFP/24/59) incorporating the 33rd Annual Report of the County Farms Estate.

The Annual Report 2023/24 covered the Committee's functions, namely, Financial performance, Estate management performance, and highlighted notable Estate achievements and events throughout the year.

Members' questions and comments included:

- As to landlord's repair and maintenance liabilities, the Committee were assured that all identified works were risk assessed and that the highest priority works were being delivered.
- Tyres that had been removed from a farm had not been fly tipped, but had been surplus and removed responsibly from the Estate.
- Revenue income showed an increase year on year, due in part to keeping rents commensurate with the open market.

* 132 **Management and Restructuring Issues**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services on County Farms Estate Management and Restructuring issues.

(a) Part Middle Winsham Farm, Braunton

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Yabsley. **SECONDED** by Councillor Chesterton and

RESOLVED that part NG 9801 and 0003 forming part Middle Winsham Farm Braunton and amounting to 0.77 acres or thereabouts be declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate and sold to the neighbouring special purchaser, subject to terms being agreed.

(b) Part Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe

Due to reasons of confidentiality the Committee agreed to consider this matter under Part II of the meeting.

(c) Higher Henland Farm, Kentisbeare

The Committee noted a typographical error in paragraph 3.3.1(i) of the report which should read 'effective 25 March 2026...'.

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

RESOLVED that

- (i) the tenant's proposed surrender of tenancy, effective 25 March 2026, be accepted; and
- (i) Higher Henland Farm comprising a house, buildings and 79.13 acres or thereabouts of land be advertised to let on the open market as a new entrant opportunity and on a Farm Business Tenancy for a term of seven years commencing 25 March 2026 (or as soon as practically possible thereafter) and terminating 25 March 2033, all subject to terms being agreed.

* 133 **The Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Code of Practice**

The Committee received the Report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services on the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Code of Practice, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the Report.

The Code of Practice had been prepared following DEFRA's response to the Rock Review, Working together for a thriving agricultural tenanted sector.

The final version of the Code which had been endorsed by all key industry stakeholders had been launched on 8 April 2024.

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

RESOLVED that the Code of Practice be endorsed.

* **134** **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.

The Committee dealt with questions raised under Part I of the meeting (Minute *130).

* **135** **Management and Restructuring Issues**

Part Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe

The Committee dealt with matters raised under Part I of the meeting and it was then **MOVED** by Councillor Yabsley, **SECONDED** by Councillor Chesterton and

RESOLVED that part Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe comprising 84.97 acres or thereabouts of bare land be let to the tenant of Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe on a further Farm Business Tenancy agreement commencing 25 March 2025 and terminating 25 March 2027, subject to terms being agreed.

* **136** **Request for Landlord's Consent for proposed Tenants' Improvements**

The Committee then considered the Report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services on a Request for Landlord's consent for proposed tenant's improvements.

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

RESOLVED that landlord's consent be granted for the tenant of East Catkill Farm, Rose Ash to cover over an open collecting yard, initially with two buildings measuring approximately 100' x 20' and 30' x 40' respectively (minimum eaves height to be 13' to give clearance for a feeder wagon) and

for a third building to be erected may be in 2025, such consent to be subject to the net of grant cost to the tenant being written down in value to £100 on a straight-line basis over a life expectancy of 25 years for a galvanised iron building or 20 years for a painted steel building.

NOTES:

1. *Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.*
2. *If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting*

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 3.15 pm

