

## Economic Development Sub-Committee

Date: Friday 12 September 2014

Time: 10.00am

Venue: Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile phones.

### SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

- 8 Report from the first meeting of the County Farms Advisory Board  
Report by the Head of Finance

A2

For further details and general enquiries about this Agenda  
please contact the Committee Officer:

Julie Mortimer on 01603 223055  
or email [committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)

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Chris Walton  
Head of Democratic Services  
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Date Agenda Published: 8 September 2014



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# Economic Development sub-Committee

Item No 8

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Report from the first meeting of the County Farms Advisory Board</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>12 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Head of Finance</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> The terms of reference will enable the County Farms Advisory Board to develop an in-depth understanding of the county farms estate and its contribution to the rural economy in order to help develop the income, maintain the capital value of the estate for the County Council whilst working with other services and authorities to maximise the utilisation of assets.	

## Executive summary

The Working Group agreed terms of reference establish the remit and working practices for the working group which is to be known as the County Farms Advisory Board. The Board proposes changes to the Policy on County farms and has agreed the 2014/15 county farms disposal programme.

### Recommendations:

1. That the proposed Terms of Reference for the County Farms Advisory Board should be agreed.
2. That the proposed changes to the Policy on county farms are agreed
3. That it is noted that the Board has agreed that those assets shown on the schedule of disposals should be declared surplus and sold.

## 1. Proposals

### 1.1 Terms of Reference

1. The working group will be formally named as the "County Farms Advisory Board"
2. The County Farms Advisory Board cannot take decisions however recommendations will be made to the Economic Development Sub-Committee that authorised the set-up of the group.
3. The County Farms Advisory Board will have a cross party membership. Membership will be determined by the Economic Development Sub-Committee
4. The County Farms Advisory Board will be comprised of Members and Officers. As with reports to Committees (Part 8.6 if the Constitution), reports to Working Groups will be produced by Officers
5. The County Farms Advisory Board will be designated as an 'advisory group' rather than a "task and finish" group and will have its terms of reference approved by the Economic Development sub Committee.

6. The County Farms Advisory Board will operate in line with the Memorandum on County Council Working Groups dated 25 July 2014.
7. The Economic Development Sub- Committee is not obliged to accept the recommendations of the County Farms Advisory Board.
8. The County Farms Advisory Board will host an annual meeting with County Farms tenants
9. The County Farms Advisory Board will consider and may make recommendations on County Farm policy matters and on the strategic management plans for each estate may consider acquisitions, disposals and allocations and the future investment strategy, and monitor the financial programme of the estate with the aim of ensuring greater transparency in decision-making. The Annex sets out the overall governance structure in relation to County Farms and the role of the County Farms Advisory Board within it
10. The establishment of this Board demonstrates a confirmed willingness for sustained member involvement in the future of the County Farms Estate.
11. The County Farms Advisory Board will work to improve relationships between tenants and the County Council to ensure greater transparency

## **1.2 Policy Revision.**

The Board has proposed changes to the Policy approved in 2010 and these changes are shown tracked in the document Annex 2 attached.

## **1.3 Disposals**

The Board considered the assets identified for disposal in the sales schedules for the next two years, Annexes 3/4 and agreed to these assets being declared surplus and disposed of. The Board was supportive of the proceeds of the sale of the house at Hall farm, Haddiscoe, being invested in additional facilities at the Care Farm at Clinks Farm, Haddiscoe.

## **2. Evidence**

The governance arrangements for working groups has been published by the Monitoring Officer and these terms of reference comply with that advice. The Working Group has held a meeting with farm tenants and agents and consulted widely and proposed changes in the Policy reflect concerns expressed at that meeting.

## **3. Financial Implications**

The establishment of the Board has no financial implications.

## **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

No risks have been identified. It is hoped that collaboration with Easton & Otley College and closer working with Suffolk will lead to innovation on the estate.

## **5. Background**

The guidance for working groups provided by the Monitoring Officer is attached as Annex 1. together with a flow chart Annex1B.

The Policy document with proposed changes shown tracked for ease of identification is attached as Annex 2.

The sales schedule for 2014/15 is Annex 3. and the schedule for 2015/16 is Annex 4.

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

**Officer Name: Andrew Crossley      Tel No: 01603 222813**

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## MEMORANDUM

**From:** Victoria McNeill  
Head of Law & Monitoring  
Officer

**To:** Committee Chairs and Vice  
Chairs; Group Leaders

**Contact:** Victoria McNeill  
**Email:** victoria.mcneill@norfolk.gov.uk

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**Ext:** (01603) 223415

**Ref:** VM/JKH  
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**Date:** 25 July 2014  
**cc:**

### County Council Working Groups

#### Background

Prior to the Council changing from a Cabinet to a Committee system of governance in May 2014, the Council had a number of Working Groups, some time and task-limited, others more advisory in their nature, across the Authority.

With the introduction of Committees it will now be for those Committees to establish new Working Groups where it thinks it appropriate to do so and set their terms of reference.

Working Groups can serve a very useful purpose in the Council's decision-making process. They permit a small group of Members to develop a more in-depth knowledge in a particular subject area and to focus on that subject area in a way that Committees have neither time nor space in the decision-making timetable to do.

Under a Committee system of governance there are restrictions on the operation of Working Groups which Members need to be aware of. These are set out below.

#### Features of Working Groups

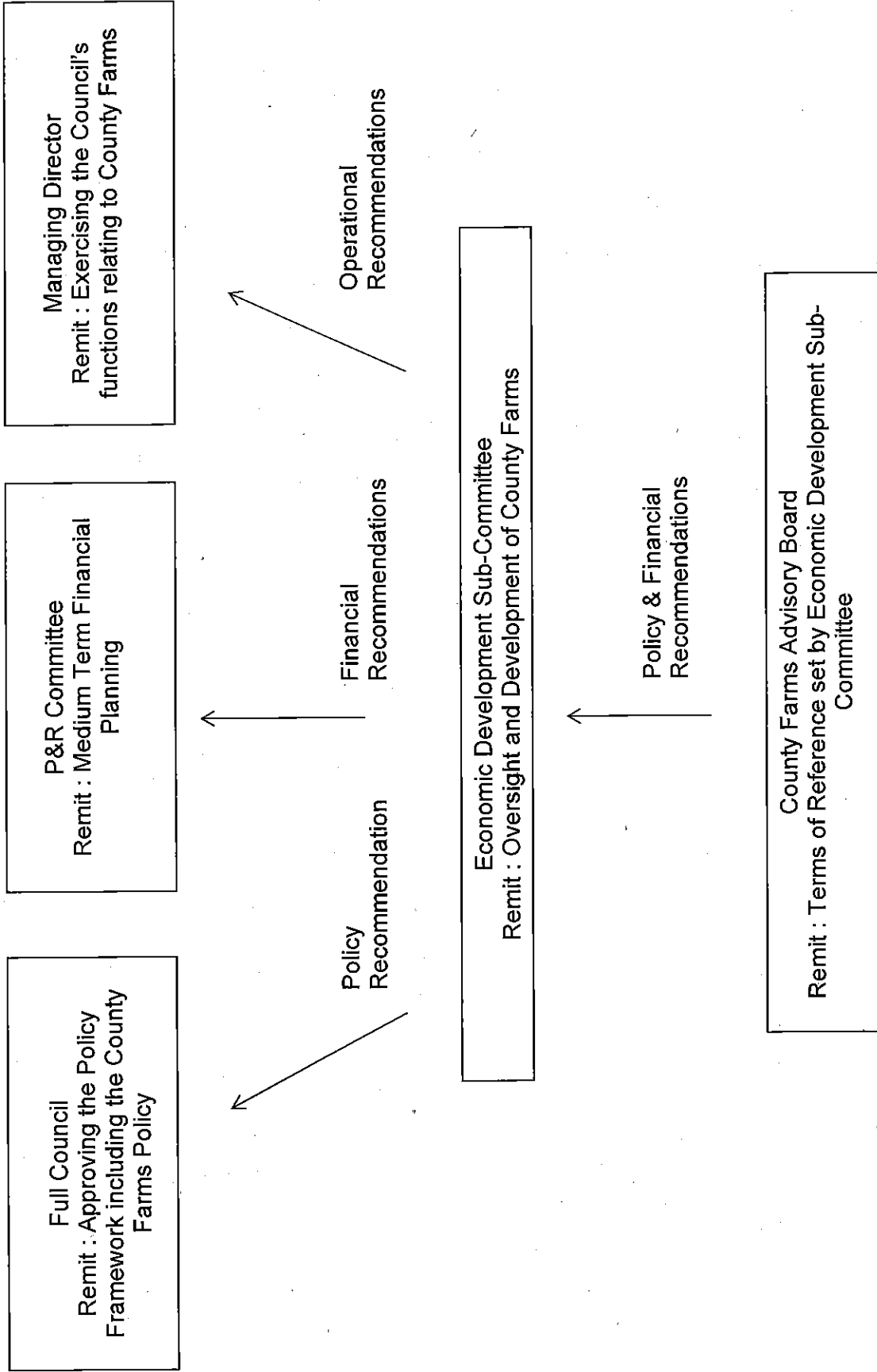
- Working Groups cannot take decisions. Decision-making is confined to Council, Committees and Sub-Committees
- A Working Group can make recommendations to the Committee or Sub-Committee that sets it up
- A Working Group need not be politically balanced. Membership will be determined by the Committee or Sub-Committee that sets it up and can draw in Members from other Committees if required

Continued ...

- Whilst Working Groups are usually comprised of Members, Officers may be invited to join from time to time. As with reports to Committees (Part 8.6 of the Constitution), reports to Working Groups will be produced by Officers
- A Working Group may be a 'task and finish group' with a fixed timescale and specific objectives to achieve or may be an 'advisory group' on a particular topic. In such cases the Committee or Sub-Committee will set the terms of reference
- Working Groups will not meet in public. They are informal meetings for the purpose of deliberation on the specific matters within their terms of reference
- Working Groups are not clerked and formal minutes are not kept. This promotes free and frank discussion within the Group and does not create an additional call on resources
- Terms of reference for the working group will be established by the Committee or Sub-Committee that sets it up
- There will be no substitutes on Working Groups. The meetings are informal, are not decision-making and will benefit most from having regular input from those who have particular knowledge of the Working Group's remit
- Committees and Sub-Committees are not obliged to accept the recommendations of a Working Group
- The Committee or Sub-Committee that establishes a Working Group also has the power to dissolve it
- The Working Group will not issue press statements on behalf of the Council nor speak to the media about its work except at the request of the Committee or Sub-Committee that set it up.

Victoria McNeill  
Head of Law & Monitoring Officer

**Annex 1B**



**Maintain the size of the Estate at 16,000 acres or more. Where land or buildings are declared surplus by the Economic Development sub-Committee upon the recommendations of the County Farms Advisory Board, and subsequently sold, to reinvest the capital receipts in order to support the value of the estate and to help maximise income return, further develop the Estate.**

Any areas identified as having development potential shall be actively promoted through the planning system and, when successful, sold with the benefit of a valuable consent and the capital receipt reinvested in the Estate.

Property identified as surplus in the Strategic Reviews shall be sold with vacant possession and any potential valuable planning consent shall be obtained prior to sale to maximise the price realised.

**Encourage commercial farm enterprises, maintain farm rental value and charge market rents on new tenancies of larger farms, on acreage over 200 acres and above, where appropriate and viable to do so, and minimise rent debt and demonstrate sound estate management in practice, having due regard to the interests and aspirations of the tenants and the viability of the holdings. The County Farms Advisory Board shall consider the options for management of the future estate when the current arrangements come to an end - from 2015 onwards, this will include the option of bringing the management back "in-house".**

Ensure the provision of viable unit sizes for a range of business models which will support or improve revenue on the Estate.

Provide the best professional standards in management of the contracts and of the Estate together with a close working relationship with the tenants to endeavour to meet their expectations and encourage sustainable farming methods to be adopted on the Estate.

**Develop the Estate as an exemplar of innovation, with closer working with Easton and Otley College, the University of East Anglia, Anglia Farmers, Norwich Science Park and others to identify opportunities for partnership working that lead to improvements in training and employment in sustainable farming, local food production and delivering community benefits, working with tenants, the County Council, communities and external partners.**

Work closely with Easton College, NRBAS, County Council Departments, tenants, Parish Councils, schools, other Smallholding Authorities and others to identify opportunities for partnership working in enabling improvements to sustainable farming, encouraging local food production, and delivering community benefits.

Work towards reducing carbon usage, for example by identifying sites and investing in farm-based, small-scale single mast wind power generation and utilising the "feed in" tariffs.

**The county farms estate should prioritise its fundamental aim of supporting new entrants to the market and the Council should manage the estate to reflect this policy aim and consider new ways to support new entrants by providing smaller**



**holdings.**

**The intermediate and larger sized farms should be encouraged to support employment and training opportunities as well as working with our Children's Services and Adult Social Care departments to maximise healthy living and personal development**

**Provide opportunities for new entrants to farming and for progression of tenants on the Estate**

Identify opportunities for new entrants to farming in Norfolk and for the progression of existing tenants in the Strategic Reviews, and investigate opportunities to allow older tenants to retire with dignity. This should ultimately increase the number of new entrants on the Estate and reduce the age profile of tenants.

**In co-operation with the Environment Section of the Council, develop the Estate as an exemplar of collaboration between landlord and tenant in delivering conservation, biodiversity and access improvements.**

Work with tenants and Environment Officers to conserve the historic landscape and identify opportunities to enhance biodiversity; for example, by planting new hedges, woodlands and orchards and by improving field margins, ponds and wetland habitats.

In addition, improve public access on the Estate with permissive walks or bridleways to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and visitors.

**Seek to develop farms to help deliver wider Corporate services and objectives such as use as an educational resource centre or Care Farm, in conjunction with the County Council's relevant departments. Also develop links with local schools.**

Promote the use of farms as an educational resource; for example to help deliver the Diplomas for 14-19 year-olds with outdoor learning or employment content.

Promote the development of Care Farms to provide the opportunity for tenants to diversify and deliver a day-care facility for Adult Social Service clients.

Promote links with schools to help them deliver the Sustainable Schools Initiative as defined in the document "Food Policy in Schools" produced by the National Governors' Association in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The above will ensure that Council assets are fully utilised to deliver a broad range of services on behalf of the Council.

**Provide or organise mentoring and training for tenants to encourage better business management and diversification.**

Work in collaboration with NRBAS and others to provide training and opportunities to meet to compare and discuss business models in both the East and West of the County.

**Identify rural exception sites for affordable housing.**

Continue to promote rural exception sites to support the Council's commitment to assist District Councils in meeting affordable housing need as part of its Affordable Housing Initiative.

**Develop a wide range of farm sizes to encourage a variety of business models and support rural development and economic regeneration. New tenancies should be based on a period of 10 years, with higher preference given to those on successful management and return to the County Council, subject to future availability of the land as identified in the Strategic Management Plan. Subletting outside the scope of the terms of the tenancy shall be actively discouraged.**

Encourage tenants to diversify and develop a range of businesses to regenerate the rural economy, create additional job opportunities and help support the services in rural communities.

Offer a range of size holdings for new entrants and new businesses.

**Develop 10-year management plans for each Estate to demonstrate what contribution each can make to the various policy objectives and enable tenants to plan and invest in their businesses for the future.**

Provide 10-year Strategic Review and Management Plans for each Estate which will give a framework for the development of the Estate within that time scale. Tenants are to be consulted as part of the initial and ongoing review processes and the plans will provide a structure for tenants which will enable them to plan their businesses more effectively.

**A cross party 'County Farms Advisory Board', reporting to the Economic Development sub-Committee, shall be responsible for recommending the overarching policy for county farms and for the implementation of policy on each estate. It will work to improve relationships between tenants and the County Council to ensure greater transparency in decision making, advise the council on policy matters and will approve strategic management plans for each estate in addition to advising on acquisitions, disposals and the future investment strategy, and for providing recommendations on acquisitions and disposals and financial management of the estate and for developing a closer working relationship between tenants and the County Council as landlord.**

**Establish a forum for tenants' views to be considered on management issues.**

Establish a Tenants' Advisory Board with tenant representatives in both the West and East of the County to meet with Members and Managing Agents to make recommendations to the Property Advisory Panel or the Cabinet Member on management issues.

Arrange opportunities for all tenants to meet on a regular basis for communication and networking purposes.

**Develop an investment programme to improve the infrastructure, buildings and storage capacity for crops on the Estate.**

Re-invest in the Estate to make it "fit for purpose" and maintain its capital value. Introduce an annual programme of dwelling refurbishment and improvement, upgrades to or replacement of farm buildings to provide "Farm Assured" quality crop storage facilities, and road and drainage works.

**Manage the trees on the Estate in the interests of safety.**

Implement Norfolk County Council's Tree Safety Policy in relation to the trees and woodlands on the Estate. Ensure that the woodlands provide an exemplar of good woodland management practice.

**Develop strategies to enable older tenants to retire with dignity and the Council to meet its obligations to tenants on retirement tenancies.**

In co-operation with tenants, seek ways of enabling older lifetime tenants to retire with dignity and thus provide opportunities for new entrants.

**Actively encourage tenants to support the Campaign for the Farmed Environment.**

Promote the National Campaign for the Farmed Environment and provide advice and encouragement for all tenants to adopt management strategies which will protect the land and water courses and improve the habitat for birds and wildlife.

The advisory board will host an annual meeting of the County Farm tenants to update on progress and discuss the future of the estate.

Parish		County Farms 2014/15		EAST/WEST	Area Ac	Guide Price	Price Agreed	Cost Code	Description
Blofield	Sparrow Hall Bungalow	East	0.17	£150,000		CCA413	ready to market		
Blofield	Site for 14 homes including AH - adj Doctors surgery	East	3.73	£475,000			planning permission granted. Seeking a reduction in AH.		
Denver	College Farm barns	West	1.25	£300,000		CCA388	Market when vacant. Has planning permission for 4 units - 1 to be retained for retiring tenant.		
Haddiscoe	House ex Cooke	East	0.10	£200,000	£230,000		terms agreed for direct sale to adjoining owner. Invest in care farm facilities		
Hindringham	Row Hill buildings	East	0.53	£80,000			Permitted development for 2 units. Seeking an additional consnet for GP building		
Lingwood	Land for PC	East	6.00	£138,000	£138,000	CCA416	approved as part of Lingwood school reorganisation		
Salthouse	Site for 2 market and 3 AH	East	0.74	£65,000			Broadland Housing Association interested in acquiring the site.		
Thorpe Market	Hall farm barns	East	3.00	£900,000		CCA356	Has planning permission for 12 holiday units. Seeking permitted development rights for 3 residential units to add to value		
Tunstead	New Barn Farm barns	East	0.91	£150,000			Has planning for 1 unit. Seeking permitted development for 3 units.		
Wiggenhall	Priory Farm Site	West	0.60	£150,000	£130,000	CCA362	has planning permission for 2 dwellings on site		
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>11.88</b>	<b>£2,608,000</b>	<b>£498,000</b>			

Parish	County Farms 2015/16	EASTWEST	Area Ac	Guide Price	Price Agreed	£/ac	Cost Code	Description
Acle	Land for 130 Homes inc AH	East	14.00	£4,000,000			CCA376	outline application to be submitted for 130 homes.
Bacton	Church Farm Buildings	East	1.50	£90,000				application for 3 units ( 2 holiday) to be submitted.
Binham	Westgate farm buildings	East	0.50	£100,000				permitted development rights to be sought
Elmham, North	Vicarage Farm Barns	East	0.72	£200,000			CCA008	detailed application to be submitted for 3 units
Hilgay TMB	Development site	West	0.56	£80,000				outline consent to be applied for
South Walsham	Site for 20 homes including 12 AH	East	1.48	£500,000				Allocated as a preferred site in Local Plan. Negotiations with Housing Association ongoing over access. PC supportive in principle.
Thurne	Home Farm Barns	East	1.00				CCA072	site to be promoted by agent
Tunstead	New Barn Farm 2 barns	East	0.91					Seek full residential use when policy changes
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>20.67</b>	<b>£4,970,000</b>				<b>£0</b>

