

Minutes - Meeting of the Companies Committee

Tuesday, 29 June 2021, 2.00 pm

Council Chamber - South Kesteven House,
St. Peter's Hill, Grantham. NG31 6PZ



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Graham Jeal (Chairman)
Councillor John Dawson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Mark Whittington

Company Directors

Councillor Kelham Cooke (InvestSK Ltd)
Councillor Barry Dobson (Gravitas Housing Ltd)
Richard Wyles (Gravitas Housing Ltd)

Officers

Assistant Chief Executive, Housing Delivery (Ken Lyon)
Strategic Director Commercial and Operations (Gary Smith)
Director of Growth and Culture (Nicola McCoy-Brown)
Acting Principal Democratic Officer (Shelley Thirkell)
Democratic Officer (Alice Atkins)
Democratic Officer (Seb Brady)

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Disclosure of interests

There were none.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February were agreed as a correct record.

4. Updates from the previous meeting

A verbal update in respect of InvestSK Ltd was provided by The Leader of the Council, in his capacity as a Company Director. Financial statements for the year end 31 March 2020, which comprised the income statement, balance sheets and notes to the financial statements, had been submitted. Recent successes of the Company had included securing close to £7million from Central Government, which would go toward multiple projects in the District.

InvestSK Ltd had been instrumental in supporting local businesses in the District throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and a total of £51million in Covid Support Grants had been distributed by InvestSK Ltd, to over three thousand businesses, within the District. InvestSK Ltd would continue to engage with the business community, to offer financial support and advice.

Last month the Council welcomed the new Director for Growth and Culture, Nicola McCoy-Brown, who would be working with the InvestSK Ltd Manager, to jointly review the Operating Model.

Noting questions asked by Committee Members:

- If clarity could be provided on the Council's responsibilities and those of InvestSK Ltd

The new Director of Growth and Culture would be working to jointly review the Operating Model of InvestSK Ltd to ensure that it best reflected the working arrangements between both the Council and InvestSK Ltd. It was noted that the Officers working with both InvestSK Ltd and the Council had performed to a high standard.

- Whether there would be an update on the St Martin's Park project.

It was noted that this project was not an InvestSK Ltd's responsibility, but that it was progressing well with significant interest in the various aspects of the site. The Planning Application was still to be finalised; demolition work would commence after the application has been considered.

- What was the reason for the delay between the finalisation of the work of the auditors and the submission of accounts for InvestSK Ltd.

It was confirmed that this delay was due to the limitations posed by Covid-19 restrictions on the small team. The submission of accounts had been achieved by the agreed deadline.

5. Work Programme 2021 - 2022

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2021 – 2022.

The following items were to be added:

- An update to be provided to the Committee on LeisureSK Ltd in September
- An update to be provided to the Committee on InvestSK Ltd in November
- An update to be provided to the Committee on Gravitass Housing Ltd in the Autumn.

6. Environment SK Limited

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations presented the report on behalf of the Director of Commercial and Operations, Ian Yates, who had since retired from the Council.

Members requested that a note of thanks for Ian Yates as a Director of EnvironmentSK Ltd and his time at South Kesteven District Council, be recorded.

The report provided an update on the delivery of the 5 Year Business Plan and proposed changes to the Directors of the Company. It was confirmed that the predicted sales target had been met, although the accounts were yet to be finalised. It was proposed that Assistant Chief Executive, Ken Lyon, would take over from Ian Yates, with Ian Yates to be offered a Non-Executive Director position.

Members raised the following:

- How accurate was the financial forecast for year 2, as opposed to the target.

It was advised that there had been movement regarding figures. Although sales from the private commercial sector had been negatively affected by the impact of Covid-19, sales from the private domestic and public sector had been positive. It was also noted that admin costs had risen due to Covid-19 restrictions, but that it was likely that over the next financial year this would no longer be an issue.

- Had the cost of grounds maintenance to the Council fallen by roughly £150,000 per year?

It was confirmed that this was correct.

- There had been several complaints made by members of the public regarding actions taken by EnvironmentSK Ltd employees, for example, staff had allegedly cut trees and hedges during bird nesting season. Could the Committee Member comment on the training needs of staff, in response to this?

It was confirmed that all EnvironmentSK Ltd staff are continuously trained and that they had received many compliments for the work they had carried out. All work undertaken would be at the request of clients, preferences of biodiversity would be at the discretion of the client.

- Members queried if a payment had been made by EnvironmentSK Ltd for their advertisement in the Council's SK Today Magazine

It was noted that no commercial payment had been made to advertise EnvironmentSK Ltd in the SK Today Magazine.

- Who would be driving sales for EnvironmentSK Ltd?

It was confirmed that the Sales Director would be instrumental in driving sales for the Company.

7. Exclusion of Press and Public

Members considered excluding the press and public, following a vote it was agreed unanimously.

DECISION

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that if they were to be present, exempt information could be disclosed to them as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

8. Gravitas Housing Limited

The Director of Gravitas Housing Ltd presented the report which updated Committee Members on; Wherry's Lane, Bourne, development project and on the marketing strategy for the disposal of the properties at the Wherry's Lane development.

9. Any other business which the Chairman, by reasons of special circumstances, decides is urgent

There were no items.

10. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 15:55.