

## SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

### **Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council of Southwold, held via Zoom at 6.00pm on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021**

PRESENT:	Councillor	I Bradbury – Town Mayor
	“	D Beavan
	“	A Betts
	“	S Flunder
	“	Mrs P Goldsmith
	“	Mrs J Jeans
	“	Mrs J Jordan
	“	M Ladd
	“	M Rowan-Robinson
	“	J A Windell

Also present; 11 members of the public, the Town Clerk.

1. **Apologies:** *To receive apologies for absence.*  
There were no apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
  - a) *To receive any declarations of Personal Interest regarding the agenda.*  
Nil.
  - b) *To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests regarding the agenda.*  
Nil.
  - c) *To note the decision of the Town Clerk regarding requests for dispensations relating to this agenda.*  
Nil.
  - d) *Councillors to be reminded of the requirement for them to individually update their Register of Interests as appropriate.*  
The Town Mayor reminded members of their legal requirements to update the Register of Interest online.
3. **Public Participation**  
*To receive comments from Southwold electors on matters on the agenda (each elector will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes). (10 minutes will be allocated overall for this section- subject to Town Mayor discretion).*  
Comments were received about the Station Road regeneration project including comments with regards to the lack of community support, design, public version of the business case review report, grant timescales, benefit of project.  
A question was raised with regards to the date by which the grant expenditure needed to be spent by. It was confirmed that the grant monies need to be spent by March 2022.
4. **Southwold Harbour** – To consider and approve the selection of one member of the Town Council to be on the Appointments Panel for the selection of the co-opted members of the HMC. Appointments Panel will be required on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.  
The Town Mayor expressed an interest in being on the Appointments Panel. Cllr Ladd proposed that Cllr Bradbury be selected for the Panel. It was suggested that a substitute be appointed in case of need.

Cllr Jeans asked whether Cllr Ladd would wish to be on the Panel. Cllr Ladd advised that he would not have the time to do so.

Cllr Windell seconded the proposal for Cllr Bradbury to be appointed to the Panel. There were no other nominations.

**It was agreed by all that Cllr Bradbury be appointed to the Appointments Panel for the selection of the co-opted members of the HMC.**

Cllr Ladd asked whether Cllr Windell would like to be the substitute. Cllr Windell advised that as he is considering whether to apply to be a co-opted member it would not be appropriate for him to do so at this time. **It was agreed by all that Cllr Ladd be appointed as a substitute.**

5. **Southwold Enterprise Hub**

a) To receive the Business Case Review including appendices (*As per Project Board agreed Terms of Reference*)

**On the proposal of Cllr Windell, seconded by Cllr Betts, it was AGREED by all to receive the Review.**

b) To consider any strategic recommendations highlighted within the report (*As per Project Board agreed Terms of Reference*)

*Strategic recommendations – see supporting papers.*

1) *DLA Conclusion Section 4.1 “that an experienced operator be procured to manage the centre.....”*

Cllr Jeans proposed the recommendation, seconded by Cllr Windell.

Discussion took place. Comments were made that the centre may well run itself after a few years and that operator costs should therefore not be front loaded and that there should a time limit for any agreement with an operator.

Cllr Flunder expressed concern about the financial viability of the scheme and the need to ensure its financial sustainability prior to bringing in another consultant.

Cllr Ladd advised that financial return was only one aspect of the project as the Council Strategy is to diversify the property portfolio and to create jobs.

Comment was made that the creation of the shops at Hurren Terrace have been a success – despite concerns that they would not be.

Cllr Windell advised that the Council does not make a huge return on any of its property and that there is a need to diversify employment in the town.

Cllr Jeans advised members that the New Anglia LEP report that there is demand for flexible workspace and that young people are returning to Suffolk who would love to be a part of this venture.

Cllr Flunder advised that he had concerns about converting to all office space, and that the diversification should include office/workspace/residential. An operator would only concentrate on office space and should therefore not be brought in at this stage.

Cllr Beavan suggested that it would be useful to hold discussions with operators to enable the cost of operator provision to be established. This would then help to assess the financial viability of the project – operators seem to be suggesting that the site is of sub optimal size and that the scheme would need to be all office space to create the offer required. Need to understand the return that the operators require to understand the complete proposal.

Cllr Bradbury advised that the project will need to stand on its financials.

Cllr Ladd commented that an experienced operator will be required and that the offer will depend on the brief that they are given.

**On the proposal of Cllr Jeans, seconded by Cllr Windell – it was AGREED with 7 in favour and 3 abstain that ‘an experienced operator is procured to manage the centre.’**

- 2) *DLA conclusion section 4.4 . “that a design review is necessary for the Enterprise Hub to offer the right mix and style of accommodation to address market demand.”*

Cllr Jeans proposed the recommendation, seconded by Cllr Windell.

Discussion took place.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson commented that the existing planning permission is still in place and that a full review is therefore not required as this will just incur more costs.

Cllr Flunder advised that the statement above presupposes that demand is known for a full office space environment.

Cllr Jeans explained that the existing planning permission needs to have residential taken out – so there will need to be amendments to the design anyway- but these will probably be via Amendments rather than a full application. Cllr Jeans advised that the design review would principally need to be on the internal design and fittings and that this will be established after discussions with an operator who would also help to inform market need.

Cllr Ladd advised that instead of design review it might be more appropriate to call it design ‘reconfiguration’.

Cllr Windell advised that there may be dormers etc to come out as part of the redesign of the residential section and that therefore there may be amendments to both internal and external design.

Cllr Flunder suggested that if the design review is to be linked to market demand requirements then until the latter is known, the design review cannot take place.

Cllr Goldsmith asked whether the spaces could be converted to something else i.e., residential if the demand for the workspace’s changes. Cllr Jeans advised that this could be incorporated within the brief for the design review.

Cllr Ladd confirmed that an operator would be able to inform on both demand and design.

**Cllr Flunder proposed that the wording be amended as follows.**

**To understand the market demand and to then have a design review based on this to establish the style and optimal mix of accommodation.**

***On the Proposal of Cllr Flunder, seconded by Cllr Ladd – it was AGREED with 8 in favour and 2 against ‘To understand the market demand and to then have a design review based on this to establish the style and optimal mix of accommodation.’***

- 3) *DLA conclusion section 4.4 “providing a link between the buildings would promote the feeling of the hub being a single entity rather than two disparate buildings.”*

Discussion about this suggestion. Members comments included that the costs would be too expensive, that the courtyard area should be left open, that the design review could consider this further.

There was no proposal forthcoming.

- 4) *DLA conclusion section 4.4 “if a shop is included, we strongly advise that this is pre let.”*

Discussion on this suggestion.

Cllr Ladd advised that the word ‘shop’ should actually refer to ‘convenience store’

Cllr Flunder advised that this suggestion could be included as part of the understanding of market demand.

**On the proposal of Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith it was proposed that ‘Southwold Town Council will incorporate a convenience store on the corner of the development and will seek this to be pre-let.’ It was AGREED unanimously to approve this recommendation.**

- c) To consider, and if agreed, approve the budget for the project plan timeline next steps. See supporting papers attached.  
Review of Capital Costs – Budget £6250 – Discussion as to whether it was more cost effective for the review of capital costs to be carried out before/ after the design review.

*Cllr Jeans left the meeting at 19.25*

Total budget figure within the supporting paper requiring approval £61,700 -

Discussion as to whether to approve all items en bloc or as individual components.

Cllr Goldsmith advised that all the items within the budget figure need to be carried out.

Cllr Beavan asked about grant funding drawdown – Cllr Ladd advised that at the Project Board meeting ESC has confirmed that they have the funding and that the monies may be drawn once the Town Council shows that it is going ahead.

Cllr Beavan queried whether, as the demand review had not taken place, should the buildings be demolished? Cllr Flunder commented that the finances of the town need to be protected.

Cllr Goldsmith suggested that the Council needs to carry out the contamination and the demolition and that the site needs to be made safe and clear – and then if Council decides to sell the site it would be clear. Cllr Bradbury commented about the insurance risk of retaining the units as they are in ill repair. Cllr Jordan commented that the units should be cleared from the site, if even only from an insurance point of view in relation to risk of the contamination.

Cllr Flunder advised that that the contamination survey could be done without the need for demolition now that the site has no tenants. Cllr Windell advised that Chick’s recommendation has been that the buildings would need to be demolished to undertake a complete survey.

Cllr Ladd asked about the financial risk to the Town Council – in relation to the risk of drawing the grant monies to pay for these works and whether they would need to be returned if the scheme does not go ahead. The Town Clerk advised that the grant monies have been provided to create jobs and that if the project does not go ahead and jobs are not created then grant monies would be expected to be returned.

The Town Mayor advised that the Town Council does have the money in the Bank from the sale of 2 of the Strickland Place properties which have been ring fenced for this project. The investment of this money could be regarded as an investment into the site.

Cllr Ladd suggested that as landlords of the site the Town Council should clear it anyway as a matter of due diligence regardless of whether the project goes ahead. Cllr Bradbury reiterated that the project will succeed or fail depending on the basis of financials and that as landlords there needs to be a clear and clean site to move forward.

Cllr Beavan advised he had taken advice and that the frames would be good for at least 30 years, that the buildings could be reclad and that the tanks can be degassed so long as concrete not broken and that the existing structures can be reused without demolition. Cllr Beavan considered that money could be saved without demolition of the buildings and that he would be totally opposed to any other suggestion.

Cllr Flunder confirmed that the contamination review can be carried out without demolition of the buildings and that the Project Manager had confirmed that this would be possible once the garage premises was empty. Considers that this option should be taken.

Cllr Windell advised that no full engineers report had been provided within the alternative proposal in which the retention of the structures had been mentioned – and that there is no evidence that the existing structures including the shop can be built on, and that the EPO has stated that the tanks will need to be removed in order to find out the state of the contamination. In addition, 30 years life span is not long.

Cllr Goldsmith commented that morally the Town Council should look to decontaminate the site properly, that the Council should not leave that legacy for any future generations, and that the site should be sorted out by this council once and for all.

Cllr Flunder advised that a report had been provided by Brian Haward with comments from John Plummer regarding the structures.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson expressed his disappointment that having considered the alternative scheme fully and having previously rejected the alternative scheme, it was now trying to be revived again.

**On the proposal of Cllr Windell, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith it was recommended that the Town Council approve the budget of £61,700 in relation to the costs as detailed in full on the attached *paper* (Review of capital costs £6,250, Regulatory items £12,000, costs related to pre demolition scoping £10,950, post demolition grounds and contamination works £32,500, - Total £61,700).**

**Recorded Vote requested.**

**Votes as follows; Cllr Beavan – against, Cllr Betts – for, Cllr Bradbury – for, Cllr Flunder – against, Cllr Goldsmith – for, Cllr Jordan – for, Cllr Ladd – for, Cllr Rowan-Robinson – for, Cllr Windell – for.**

**The motion was passed with 7 in favour and 2 against.**

6. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:** Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 6.30pm.