

## July 2023 update of progress on Southwold Enterprise Hub

For the new Town Council, it's very much a case of "we are where we are, and let's make the best of the situation we find ourselves in".

Revised planning permission was granted on 23 February 2022 for the development of the site in its present constitution, namely a ground floor retail shop on the corner of Blyth Road and Station Road with a residential flat above, with the remainder of the two blocks under construction being a combination of shared workspace, meeting room, and managed workspaces, with a view to creating an Enterprise Hub. This followed the reappraisal of available funds against costs, and grant monies being available conditional on the space being used for this purpose.

A construction contract was signed with Mixbrow Construction in August 2022 and is progressing well. The contract allows for 53 weeks on site which commenced November 2022 following site clearance. The contract is being managed on behalf of Southwold Town Council and East Suffolk Council by Allman Woodcock Ltd, Quantity Surveyors, and the overall project is being managed by Richard Uttings Associates, Construction Cost and Project Managers. TMS Media Limited is retained to provide interim publicity surrounding the development of the site. There has been a small delay due to matters outside of the contractors control (UKPN and BT works ) This is currently under review by the project managers, and it is hoped that the construction can gain back some of the time lost. It is hoped that construction will be completed before the end of January 2024. There will then be a handover and fit out period of up to 6 weeks.

The £3m total project has been aided with funding by Coastal Community Fund, Suffolk Inclusive Growth Fund, East Suffolk Council, with the town council contributing the balance from the sale of two properties at Strickland Place. East Suffolk Council will receive a share of the freehold of the Station Yard site in return for their investment. A Coastal Community revenue grant was also received for the project to provide for such items as business support, apprenticeships, marketing.

After a tendering process with prospective operators, Heads of Terms were signed with operators MENTA in May 2023 for the lease of two blocks on the site. MENTA is a not-for-profit organisation providing Business Advice, Training, Networking, Events and Workspace to SMEs across Suffolk and Norfolk. MENTA's intention is to manage Block 1 with a combination of shared workspace and sublet managed workspaces, whilst Block 2 has 6 sublet managed workspaces. The managed work spaces are flexible and each will be sub-let for the sub-lessee to fit out as they require. MENTA anticipates that with the construction programme being as above, they will be ready to take on the occupation before the end of March 2024. A public meeting will be held during September to provide further updates.

The Town Council will retain the residential flat above the shop. The Town Council also will retain the retail space on the corner of Station Road, Blyth Road and will soon be offering this business opportunity for tender – anyone who wishes to express an initial interest for more information should register their details by e mailing [admin@southwoldtowncouncil.com](mailto:admin@southwoldtowncouncil.com).