

Decision on future of Southwold Harbour

A historic joint meeting of the Cabinet of Waveney District Council (population 118,000) and Southwold Town Council (population 900) took place on Friday March 15th at Stella Peskett Hall. Both Councils agreed unanimously (1) to note and endorse the recommendations of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee (JC) of March 6th, (2) to direct the JC to advise WDC and STC on proposals for a Harbour Management Committee to succeed the JC, enable governance improvements in line with the Ports Good Governance Guidance (2018), and design proposals (likely to involve a Harbour Revision Order) addressing future ownership and providing for the long term welfare, sustainability, responsibility, liability and delivery of the Southwold Harbour lands.

13 members of the public were present and several took the opportunity to make a brief statement or ask a question. Kerry Blair, WDC's Director of Operations, outlined the recent history of discussions about the future of the harbour, the public consultation that has taken place over recent months, and the detailed recommendations of the March 6th Joint Committee. These included the main red lines that had been set down by Southwold Town Council, encapsulating the core issues raised by the public and by other local organisations, i.e strong local representation on the Harbour Management Committee, no possibility of sale of any part of the Harbour Lands to a third party, and ring-fencing of the income from the Harbour Lands for the protection and benefit of the Harbour and Harbour Lands. The tabled recommendation only 'noted' these recommendations of the JC, but an amendment proposed by the Southwold Town Mayor and seconded by the Leader of WDC inserted the words 'and endorse', to make clear the commitment to these red lines.

There was discussion of the time-scale for the Joint Committee to deliver proposals for a new Harbour Management Committee and there was agreement that a target date of July 2019 would be aimed for.

Just before the start of the meeting Cllr Beavan tabled an 'Appendix A', which he described as a framework for the future of the Harbour, on behalf of the Southwold Haven Group. Councillors did not have time to read this, nor was it discussed, but it was agreed to refer it to the Joint Committee for future consideration.

There was a brief discussion on the potential impact of coastal management schemes on the future of the harbour.

Each Council separately moved to a vote on the recommendations, and both voted unanimously in favour.

This was the culmination of an ever-improving relationship between STC and WDC, which we must continue to foster with the new East Suffolk District Council after the merger on 1st April 2019.

Cllr Mark Bee, Leader of WDC, closed the meeting with the comment that this was the last ever meeting of the Waveney Cabinet.

Cllr Michael Rowan-Robinson
(Southwold Town Mayor)