

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council of Southwold, held in the Council Chamber at 7.00pm on Tuesday 14th January 2020

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

Also present; 30 members of the public, and the Town Clerk, and High Steward.

1. **Apologies:** *To receive apologies for absence.*
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Tobin and Tucker.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a) *To receive any declarations of Personal Interest regarding the agenda.*
There were no Declarations of Personal Interest.
 - 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. **Minutes:** (i) To approve and sign the minutes of the Meetings of the Town Council held on Tuesday 7th January 2020 (*see blue papers attached*). **On the proposal of Cllr Windell, seconded by Cllr Betts it was unanimously RESOLVED by all to approve the Minutes of Tuesday 7th January 2020.**
4. **Public Forum**
 - a) 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*).
The Chairman asked Members for permission to call on Brian Haward at any stage of the meeting. **On the proposal of Cllr Windell, seconded by Cllr Jeans it was unanimously RESOLVED to approve this proposal.**

The Chairman suggested that questions may be more appropriate to be taken once all had received the presentation but that any immediate questions from members of the public could come forward at this stage.

A member of the public requested that Council consider the protocol regarding issues of confidentiality and freedom of information and that training be suggested for members of staff.

Public participation closed.

5. **To receive presentation from Working group/ Task and Finish Group - to investigate an alternative proposal for the Station Yard redevelopment.**

Presentation provided by Cllr Flunder and Cllr Beavan as Council Members of the Working Group/Task and Finish Group.

Cllr Flunder suggested to Members that questions be held until the end of the presentation and thanked the Town Council for holding the meeting. Thanks were also extended to the Working Group Members and individuals who had provided the information being provided together with existing tenants and to architects John Bennett and Brian Haward who had assisted at no cost.

Cllr Flunder presented a series of slides which set out the objectives of the Working Group, questions to consider, and summarised the alternative proposal. Two new plans, one from each architect mentioned above, were presented to the meeting each providing an alternative design for the Station Road site and alternative possible uses of the premises to be developed.

The proposal based around the designs from Mr Bennett would comprise of live/work units and garage workshops constructed within the existing structures with a conversion cost of approximately £1.154million excluding drainage contamination and professional fees.

The proposal based around the designs from Mr Haward would also utilise existing structures to create light industrial and business units within the site. Cost budget for this proposal would be in the region of £2million which would include £225k for decontamination remediation (approx. £1.74million build plus extras).

Under both proposals the existing paint shop would be demolished.

Mr Haward was present at the meeting and spoke to the plans drawn up by himself.

Having completed the presentation, Members were then invited to ask questions. Initial question was raised as to which alternative was the preferred option of the Working Group.

Question was also then raised regarding the structures of the existing premises and whether they would be sufficient to take the weight of the structural proposals.

Questions were also raised with regards to potential decontamination remediation and the effect this may have on the existing structures.

Cllr Flunder advised that the Working Group had received a report regarding the use of the existing structures which suggests that this should be possible, and that the contamination remediation would need to be understood in order to assess the effect of remediation strategy.

Questions were also asked regarding the benefit to the town of either or both schemes in comparison with the enterprise hub option. Query was raised regarding evidence of need for live/work units/light industrial units. Discussion took place regarding the costs associated with both proposed alternative schemes and potential financing options. Questions were also raised regarding whether there would be requirements for planning applications, and whether ESC planning policy would permit either/both schemes.

Members requested that the slides be presented again to enable them to gain a better understanding of the proposals. Cllr Beavan and Cllr Flunder presented all slides.

Discussion took place regarding the courtyard and its intended future use – the working group members advised that parking would be required within the courtyard for the proposed schemes.

Discussion then took place regarding the cost/income returns that may be applicable to either or both schemes.

The Working Group advised that they had gone as far as they could without financial assistance and that finance would be required to enable further details to be provided including provision of a feasibility study/business plan/pre-application planning advice.

Cllr Ladd advised that the planning permission already granted on this site is for flexible use/flexible workspace which appeared to be similar to that being suggested in the second proposal from Mr Haward. Cllr Ladd suggested that it would be unlikely for either of the above new proposals to be eligible for the CCT funding.

Cllr Jeans explained the details of the planning application that the Town Council had already received approval for, together with the use classes contained within it.

Cllr Flunder confirmed that as a next stage, the cost/ income figures for the schemes would need to be considered against potential income to assess viability.

Further discussion took place regarding the potential timescales required to further consider the proposals for an alternative scheme. Discussion took place regarding the key timescales within the enterprise hub development project plan and the potential impact that consideration of any alternative proposal may have on the CCF grant funding.

The Chairman then invited comments from the public. It was agreed by all that Standing Orders would be suspended to allow this to occur.

Public comment

A member of the public voiced concern about the viability of the enterprise hub project, and the costs of a fallback position of converting into the flexible workspace into residential properties. The resident also expressed concern regarding the figures used within the business plan for potential rents of the units.

A member of the public asked whether Council was certain that the CCF funding could not be transferred to such an alternative scheme as being proposed above. A member of the public asked about the critical pathway for the enterprise hub project and whether this was achievable. A member of the public asked whether the grant as stated is definitely available.

Public session closed

Proposal on agenda paper - to consider the following proposal; It was proposed by Cllr Beavan, seconded by Cllr Flunder ‘That the Station Yard working group be asked to prepare a brief for the February meeting for a business case to be worked up, based on the alternative plans submitted, and accordingly amend the group’s terms of reference.’ (see attached).

Discussion took place regarding the above.

Cllr Beavan advised that the Working Group had not had sufficient time to provide all the answers. The environmental study was awaited and that therefore the proposal was asking for sufficient time to work up a costed brief to enable a business plan and pre-app advice to be sought. Cllr Beavan advised that the Working Group would then request a budget for a business plan and a pre-app at the February Town Council meeting.

Cllr Beavan and Cllr Flunder were reminded that the original Terms of Reference for the Working Group was to bring forward one proposal and Members asked for confirmation of the preferred option to be taken forward for further consideration.

Cllr Beavan and Cllr Flunder advised that there is no business plan on either and that the Working Group would like time to consider which was most viable but from initial assessments, the second proposal, as shown within the plans from Mr Haward, would be the more viable. Members asked whether this one proposal would therefore be considered as the preferred option of the Working Group to be discussed in more depth as per the resolution being suggested above – it was agreed by Cllr Flunder and Cllr Beavan that if a single option was to be considered further, the preferred option would be to take forward the scheme as described within the plans from Mr Haward.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that he would oppose the motion to extend to 28th February 2020 and asked whether there was sufficient information already held by the Working Group for information to be provided to the consultant to prepare a feasibility/business plan.

Discussion took place regarding the amount of work required to move onto the next stage and Cllr Flunder confirmed that it would be beneficial to the working group for the original consultant to take the information to the next stage.

Cllr Ladd advised that as this is a once in a lifetime opportunity it would be appropriate for more details to be available to Members to enable any further discussions, acknowledging that the CCF funding had a tight timescale and therefore this information would be required as soon as possible.

Discussion took place on the project plan timescales. Cllr Flunder emphasised that the Working Group were not slowing down anything that the Town Council already needed to proceed with on the original scheme and that the Working Group were just asking for alternatives to be considered.

Information from NWES regarding potential rental rates was provided to the meeting. Reference was made to the information that is detailed within the business plan regarding rents.

Cllr Ladd suggested that it would be appropriate for the Working Group to have the services of the existing consultant who could assess the viability of the scheme and that he would be supportive of an extension, on the basis that it is not affecting the timescale of the original project. Cllr Ladd proposed that the Working Group be provided with the services of the existing consultant up to a maximum of £1,000. Cllr Jordan suggested that the resulting feasibility assessment be provided for the Town Council meeting on 28th January 2020. Cllr Beavan was asked whether, as an ESC Ward Councillor, he could ask for initial advice from ESC Planning Department which could then come forward to the Town Council meeting of 28th January 2020. Cllr Beavan confirmed that he would be happy to do that.

Amended Proposal – Cllr Ladd proposed that;

a) the Station Road Working Group be asked to prepare a business case for the Town Council meeting to be held on 28th January 2020, with the assistance of the business consultant up to cost of £1,000 (and in excess of that with the agreement of the Town Mayor, Cllr Bradbury and the Chair of Finance, Cllr Betts).

b) Gain a written response from the ESC Planning Department as to the viability of the alternation scheme.

Cllr Windell seconded the amended proposal.

Further discussion took place regarding the amended proposal and the potential timescales for receiving further advice from planning on the above alternative proposal as detailed in drawings from Mr Haward, together with initial business plan advice.

RESOLUTION

On the proposal of Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Beavan it was proposed that;

a) the Station Road Working Group be asked to prepare a business case for the Town Council meeting to be held on 28th January 2020, with the assistance of the business consultant up to cost of £1,000 (and in excess of that with the agreement of the Town Mayor, Cllr Bradbury and the Chair of Finance, Cllr Betts).

b) Gain a written response from the ESC Planning Department as to the planning viability of the alternative scheme.

RESOLUTION APPROVED UNANIMOUS.

6. **Urgent Business:** to act upon any matter of a non-financial urgency, within the meaning of the Standing Orders, which may be brought to the attention of the Town Council with the consent of the Town Mayor previously obtained.

Nil

7. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:**

Tuesday 28th January 2020 at 7pm

Signed

Dated.....

DRAFT