

Minutes of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee Meeting held at Riverside,
4 Canning Road, Lowestoft on **Monday, 26 October 2015 at 2.00 pm**

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Members present:

Councillors C Law (Chairman), I Bradbury, M Horwood, F Mortimer, D Palmer, D Ritchie and W Windell

Also in attendance

Councillor L Gooch

Officers present

A Charvonia (Assistant Chief Executive), L Beevor (Southwold Town Council Clerk), P Simmons (Southwold Harbour Master), P Willis (Southwold Caravan Site Manager) and N Wotton (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES / SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Waveney District Councillors M Barnard, L Smith (Substitute) and M Rudd.

Councillor F Mortimer attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor M Barnard.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THIS MEETING

Mr Charvonia, Strategic Director & Monitoring Officer, called for nominations for Chairman of the meeting. It was duly proposed, seconded and following a collective vote it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor C Law be appointed Chairman for this meeting of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee.

NOTE: Councillor Law presided over the rest of the meeting.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THIS MEETING

The Chairman called for nominations for Vice Chairman of the meeting. It was duly proposed, seconded and following a collective vote it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor W Windell be appointed Vice Chairman for this meeting of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5 SOUTHWOLD HARBOUR LANDS JOINT COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED

That the Terms of Reference to be used for this and any subsequent meetings of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee be noted.

6 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, subject to the replacement of the words 'could be', with 'are' in the first bullet point on the fourth page of the Minutes, the Minutes of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee Meeting held on 18 March 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was confirmed that in future, bullet points within the Minutes would be numbered for ease of reference.

7 PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Charvonia introduced a report, which sought to provide an overview of the operational performance of Southwold Harbour and Caravan Site. It was noted that it was good practice to review overall performance on a regular basis and from a strategic perspective.

Clarification was sought regarding the recent LGO Ombudsman Review, which related to the charging for the second row of the caravan site as a premium site. It was noted that the Ombudsman had ruled that this practice had insufficient justification and each pitch needed to be assessed on an individual basis. Although the Council disagreed with this decision, staff were working on a process of communication and were providing refunds.

A Councillor congratulated the staff at the Harbour and Caravan Site for their hard work and dedication, as evidenced within the positive report. However, it was noted that additional financial and budgetary information would be useful in future reports. After further discussion, it was agreed that profiled financial information would be provided in future reports.

A Councillor queried the extensive clean-up operation which had been undertaken by staff and customers at the Harbour, to ensure the flood banks were clear for the Environment Agency to complete maintenance work. Reassurance was provided that work continued to ensure any businesses or huts which had encroached onto the flood bank were removed.

In respect of the Harbour Lands Car Park, a Councillor queried whether the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee would be able to contribute strategically to car parking policy and have some influence on the setting of car parking fees. It was confirmed that as the car park was within the Harbour Lands, this was acceptable.

RESOLVED

That the update report on the operational performance of Southwold Harbour and Caravan Site be received.

8 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Mr Charvonja introduced a report, which sought approval to recruit dedicated project management resources in order to accelerate the delivery of the optimum options for the sustainable, long term, ownership, control and delivery of the Southwold Harbour Lands. It was noted that the Joint Committee had successfully led a comprehensive work programme of engagement and consultation during 2014/15 that culminated in a series of decisions being made at its meeting on 18 March 2015.

Those decisions included:

- That the legal model for the new governance arrangement should be a charitable company limited by guarantee ('Harbour Trust'), supported by a trading subsidiary;
- The key provisions of the governing document;
- The mechanism for the recruitment, selection and appointment of trustees;
- That the statutory function of the Harbour Authority should be transferred to the new Harbour Trust.

It was noted that the lack of progress since the 18 March 2015 meeting had been disappointing and it had been hoped that the recent recruitment of the Head of Communities at the District Council could bring additional resource to this project. However, it was now recognised that this project could only be delivered efficiently and effectively if it had its own dedicated project management resource.

Mr Charvonja explained the three recommendations contained within the report in detail, as the recommendations were in the style, terminology and format used by the District Council.

The Chairman reported that the District Council was very keen for the work of the Joint Committee to progress, however Mr Charvonja did not have the capacity to support this area of work to fruition, due to his demanding role as Strategic Director for both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils. It was hoped that the appointment of a Programme Manager would give the project the dedicated time and support it needed and the holder of this position would be accountable directly to the Joint Committee.

The Vice Chairman requested reassurance and a commitment that the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee would meet regularly for the rest of the 2015/16 municipal year and beyond, and that informal meetings could take place as appropriate. It was confirmed that the Joint Committee could meet on a quarterly basis in future and potential meeting dates would be circulated in due course.

A Councillor queried whether the work could be completed without the need to appoint a Programme Manager and if the proposed £40,000 could be spent more effectively in a different way. Mr Charvonja reported that there was a significant amount of work which needed to be completed before the Harbour Trust could be established and it was unlikely to be completed without the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager. There was insufficient capacity available within the District Council to provide the Joint Committee with enough support to undertake the work themselves. Another option would be to employ the services of Winckworth Sherwood Solicitors, however this option had been discounted as it would be disproportionately expensive.

Reassurance was provided that due diligence had been considered and had been thoroughly embedded throughout the process for creating the Harbour Trust. The Joint Committee had a clear function and responsibility to set up a sustainable and robust Trust which would be able to function securely for the foreseeable future.

Clarification was provided regarding the future Programme Manager role and it was noted that it was likely to be offered as a Fixed Term Contract, for no longer than 2 years. It may also be prudent to look at performance based payments, to ensure that progress was made in a timely manner. Work would take place to ensure that the correct candidate was appointed, who had the correct skills, knowledge and experience required to progress this project.

In respect of the recruitment process, it was reported that it would take a minimum of three months to appoint the Programme Manager. This would include 1 month for the position to be advertised, time for shortlisting, interviews and then the successful candidate would need to serve their notice period for their current post. It was reported that if the successful candidate was already employed by Waveney District Council, then there could be some flexibility regarding their notice period, which could potentially allow them to start work for the Joint Committee sooner.

RESOLVED

1. That Waveney District Council appoints a dedicated Project Manager to accelerate delivery for the SHL of the transformation project.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director of Waveney District Council to determine the nature and length of the Project Manager's contract, line management and work pattern.
3. That upto £40,000 be allocated from the SHL account to fund the costs of the Project Manager.

The meeting concluded at 2.35 pm

Chairman