

**MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC)
HELD AT THE HAROUR OFFICE/ VIA TELECONFERENCE ON 26th MAY 2020 AT
6:30PM**

PRESENT: Andy Frary (AF) – Chair, Chris Thomson (CT), Mel Catton (MC), Avril Lill (AL), Kevin Theobald (KT), Bob Ellis (BE), Denys Hickey (DH), Josh Danziger (JD), Nick Groom (NG)

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS: Robert Smith (RS) Harbour Master, Simon Cooper (SAC) Harbour Administrator

1. CHAIRMAN WELCOME

AF welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for dialling in.

2. APOLOGIES

Ashely Mullenger (AM), Brian Riches (BR).

3. APPROVE MINUTES

The Commissioners confirmed that they were happy for AF to sign the minutes from the last meeting.

SAC then went on to run through matters arising that were not covered in the written update that formed part of agenda item 4 and took an action to circulate the Ian Scott report to JD

4. HARBOUR UPDATE / 5. COMMISSIONERS UPDATE ON MATTERS ARISING

SAC walked the WHC through the financials highlighting the COVID impacting income predominantly being from the Carpark and Fishermans Diesel. Expenditure was flat other than exceptional items - the purchase of Pontoons and the Royal Haskoning Study.

CT asked about the furlough payments being received which SAC confirmed would be showing in Mays numbers as the claim was only submitted in May for April wages and the 3 weeks in May a claim was submitted today.

SAC then asked the WHC to refer to the written update sent out with the agenda which was a summary provided to the WHC to advise on current activity.

Matters discussed were; Albatros – The new owner plans to move the vessel to Maldon mid-June.

Triathlon – having looked at the assessments for social distancing for other operations in the Port and exchange of e-mails with British Triathlon, we do not feel comfortable we can run the event safely as matters stand. The WHC were asked to endorse the view to cancel this years triathlon and refund the competitors.

Horse – whilst all were keen to see the Horse be put back on the sand, RS considered that we should keep a watching brief so as not to attract any criticism about the Port encouraging people to visit. We had received some adverse comment keeping the car park open which was deemed to be unfair as it would not have stopped people coming anyway and avoided even more vehicles parking around the town. RS/SAC will keep a watching brief.

COVID – NG wondered if further social distancing measures on the quay would be something to consider. RS and SAC said that they had looked at it but given the quay is so long and only part of it had railings plus the added fishermans quay being worked everyday, there wasn't a practical way to implement. A similar

conclusion came when deciding to allow Gillying on the quay where it felt impossible to stop it and also being unable to cordon it off. AL asked if the gillying signs can be re-installed which SAC confirmed he would do.

Car park - AL asked if any further consideration had been made with regards to putting up extra signage in the car park. RS stated that he didn't think people would read it and previously when we have introduced our own signage we were told to remove it as it contravened the car park company requirements. AL felt that the wording proposed isn't the same and that we ought to avoid people receiving PCN's especially in the current climate. SAC said he will review the contract as he recalled there was mention of signage in the contract and engage with the car park company.

Tern barge – RS reported there was some activity on the barge but had not seen any eggs albeit it was still early in the season. AL asked if she could have the photos from the camera. SAC agreed to share but likely to be the end of the season when we retrieve the memory card.

Beach Patrol – At present there wasn't any plan to re-launch Beach Patrol as the RIB used doesn't allow social distancing to be followed. Also, as we had not recruited, it would now be difficult to get it manned as those who would normally do it would be finding other employment. AL requested that should circumstances change it would be useful to provide them training and awareness regarding the seals.

Channel – CT asked if we knew what the cluster of buoys were between 12 & 14 in the channel. RS confirmed that it was the mussel lays.

COVID announcements - JD asked about the notices posted on the website dated 14th May regarding visiting vessels. SAC explained that visiting vessels can enter the harbour limits but as they are not allowed to stay overnight we expect them to leave and return to their home port. In SACs mind the message was pointed towards vessels at Blakeney and Burnham who might come for the day. JD thanked SAC for the explanation. AL thought that the messages and updates were clear and the WHC congratulated the team on how they had performed through the issue given the circumstances.

NNDC – RS advised that we had been expecting to be approached by NNDC to look at a proposal from them to close off the Quay and Staithe street in a response to generate activity once lockdown was relaxed to help the businesses. Nothing actually was received (and Holkham was the same also). MC had raised it with RS. RS subsequently spoke with Greg Hewitt, Clerk to Wells Town Council.

Land transactions update – SAC provided an update on the various transactions underway.

5. COMMISSIONERS UPDATE - YEAR EXTENSION

Upon further investigation the governance is looking more complicated than first expected so we have approached the BPA to help understand the requirements and whether it can be done simply.

6. WHMT

SAC explained that given all activities are on hold until further notice and now the cancellation of the Triathlon, it is looking likely that for this year now there won't be much activity and thus expenditure. It is therefore likely we consolidate our position and look to go again next year.

7. AOB

It was noted that most attendees' comments were taken in the updates above.

DH questioned if we were aware of struggling Harbour businesses, we could perhaps look to support. AF commented that the Fisherman have received various avenues of support and wasn't aware of any other areas.

8. Staff Matters

Confidential staff matters were discussed.

Meeting was then closed @ 19.15