

**MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC)
HELD @ THE MALTINGS**

30th March 2021 AT 6:30PM

PRESENT: Mel Catton (MC) – Chair, Ashley Mullenger (AM), Brian Riches (BR), Denys Hickey (DH), Nick Groom (NG), Chris Thomson (CT), Kevin Theobald (KT), Bob Ellis (BE), Sally Wynne (SW),

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

1. CHAIRMAN WELCOME

MC started with saying it was 1 year ago that the Pandemic took hold and wanted to credit the Harbour Master and team for providing continuity and ongoing commitment to keeping the Harbour running as effectively as it has been.

MC then wanted to inform the Commissioners that sadly Gary Anthony, a former Commissioner and long standing resident of the town had passed away and the Commissioners wanted to pass on their thoughts to all family and friends.

With this news and with Joan Price's passing earlier in the year MC invited all attendees that a minutes silence is held in memory of both Gary and Joan.

2. APOLOGIES

Josh Danziger (JD), Andy McCallum (AMc)

3. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

SAC welcomed Chris Greeves (CG) from Larking Gowen LLP who was attending via 'Microsoft Teams' and invited CG to walk those present through the 2020 annual accounts.

CG informed the Committee that an earlier meeting the week before provided the attending commissioners and SAC an in depth review and so for brevity would walk through the items of interest/ note and to invite questions at the end. The key points noted were;

- Overall, little material movement seen year on year – and most notable was that generally, the Pandemic had a lesser impact than perhaps expected – predominantly revenue in the car park, diesel sales and visitor numbers being those most affected.
- CG then raised the request made by SAC to amend the Depreciation policy which can be found on page 9 of the accounts. The proposal was to look to simplify the methodology so that going forward the criteria for a fixed asset would be one that had a cost of £5,000 or more with an expected useful life of at least 24 months. Secondly, depreciation would be calculated on a straight line basis for plant & machinery and motor vehicles rather than on a reducing balance calculation as it is now which would be more prudent than the current calculation used. SAC asked the commissioners if they were happy with the change to which the Committee unanimously agreed.
- CG then went on to describe the reserves, including a new column for the Lobster Hatchery and the lifeboat horse. CG also advised that Larking Gowen had undertaken an exercise to ensure that the SCIRA funded assets aligned their depreciation with the reserves held so that they match to ensure there was no shortfall seen.

- RS requested where the Jordans land purchase be seen in the accounts. SAC pointed out that the overall value of Freehold land on page 7 had increased, recognising the purchase. CG added that on page 11 there is a specific column of additions under note 8 – Tangible fixed assets that highlighted the purchase.
- CG also advised the Commissioners that the other noteworthy point was the increase in taxation which is directly linked to the calculation that has to be made under accounting rules that we allow for the cost of realisation of the assets in the balance sheet as well as taxation on profits made as can be seen on page 9, Note 1, Accounting policies.

Given there were no further questions/ comments MC requested from the WHC to approve the Annual Accounts 2020. All those present confirmed. SAC then arranged for BE and MC to sign the accounts as presented. SAC thanked CG for his time and explaining the accounts. CG then dropped off the call

4. APPROVE MINUTES

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

5. HARBOUR EXECUTIVE UPDATE

RS/SAC then went on to run through the written update that formed part of the agenda item adding;

1. Albatros – SAC had drafted the mooring/user agreement which the WHC can review the criteria for the return and usage policies to ensure that prior to issuing the proposed agreement to the owners we have a clear agreement ourselves. Bob Richardson provided a copy of the latest newsletter which was attached to the papers at the meeting. WHC have ordered the Gantry which is being fabricated.
2. Jordans – The land is now in the process of being cleared, ready to be landscaped. Then RS proposed that we could erect a fence and doorway akin to the style on the other pontoons with the 'Jordans Quay' above the doorway. Turning to potential use, SAC reminded the WHC that the original idea was to use the land in some way for the WHMT however with the WHMT being inactive for some time and unlikely to gear up to a large extent in the next 12 months or so along with the added pressure to look at alternative income streams perhaps other uses for the land could be used. SAC then described the opportunity to purchase some modular units that are cladded which could be rented out to individuals looking for a studio/office type facility which RS had been approached about numerous times in the past. There was some debate amongst the commissioners on how easy are they to move in the event of high tides, usage, how long the rents would be for but ultimately all Commissioners were in favour of pursuing purchasing the units and generating 'pods' that could be rented out for users to enjoy the location and make use of the facilities. CT mentioned that Southwold have something similar which SAC agreed to look into to learn/ capture any good ideas.
3. Sailing Club Land – SAC advised it was now with the solicitors to progress the purchase. The land was designated as expected but in the exchange with the council they have confirmed in writing that the current use is unaffected by the decision.
4. Car Park – a survey will be undertaken next week to obtain a more detailed cost of moving to a barrier system. MC will attend that meeting with SAC. The previously approved price change from £4.50 to £5 has been implemented and the signs updated. If we were to look at

a new system for the car park it would make sense to look at resurfacing once the works were complete. SAC will co-ordinate further pending the future decision on how we operate the car park.

5. Cabby – RS advised that the crowdfunding initiative to raise money for a survey was achieved. RS advised that he had a meeting next week to obtain more information but as this now seems to be gathering momentum invited the commissioners to start attending these meetings so as to keep abreast of developments. At present it is very early days, the full idea is yet to be established and whilst no commitment had been made to the Cabby project, RS said it was worth supporting their ideas until we need to make a formal decision as to how it would work should it come to Wells. SW, CT and NG all expressed an interest in attending future meetings as/when appropriate.
6. Lobster Hatchery – SAC advised that the tanks were now due to be delivered. Costs wise, the funds allocated have been largely spent but there was little left else to purchase at this stage. MMO and EIFCA had both provided their agreements and so all that was left was a visit from the Fishing Inspectorate to advise and support our bio-security policy and working practices. The visit will occur once we have the tanks and there is something to show them.
7. Oil Pollution Contingency Planning – there are 3 days allocated 13/14/15 April for the refresher training to take place for the Harbour Team and also the 3 year desktop exercise which is a requirement to be undertaken in 2021. In conjunction with that our 5 year plan is also up for renewal and has been submitted accordingly following consultation with interested parties.
8. Gilly Hut – SAC advised, like last year, whilst there are social distancing measures in place it is extremely difficult to hire equipment whilst also keeping in line with guidelines and cleaning the kit inbetween different people using it. As such the Gilly Hut will be suspended for a further year.
9. Beach Patrol – Like the Gilly hut, managing to socially distance on the RIB with 2 people can't be achieved and no one else can board the RIB either in the event of anyone needing help. It is therefore very limiting as to how it can operate safely. The Commissioners though were keen to revisit this as/when COVID restrictions are lightened given the season is going to be busy and with the likelihood of visitors unfamiliar with the beach needing more guidance than usual. The WHC acknowledged that recruitment becomes harder also the longer it is left but the topic can be rolled forward for assessment at the next meeting.
10. Paddleboard school – the operator is now definitely going ahead and as such confirmed that they would like a place to keep kit and park up whilst training. We have agreed to provide space to rent a container which they will pay for and which they can park in front of. RS advised there will be no additional charge of 2021 for them to use the harbour.
11. Gearing up for the season – SAC just wanted to highlight that given the expectation we will be very busy it was important to ensure we are organised. With COVID measures still being required additional cleaning regimes are being introduced, the facilities barge will be cleaned daily by a commercial contractor, the barge itself is now fitted with air purification systems, a traffic light entry and hand sanitiser. SAC also advised we will need to keep an eye on volumes of people on the pontoons, parking arrangements and areas such as the fisherman's quay are cleared as much as possible to make the daily cleaning exercise simpler etc etc.
12. Flooding updates – RS advised that we had announced a public consultation which has had limited response but that was expected. As restrictions relaxed it was hoped we would be able to kick start so as to ensure we give maximum opportunity to hear peoples views. Royal Haskoning has supported Holkham in their study to which RS attended and now the Burnhams are doing the same which will provide a full assessment from Wells all the way along the coast to the Burnhams. The Coastal futures forum continues to which both Robert

and Josh attend albeit Josh with a Burnham 'hat on'. KT highlighted an article which announced DEFRA were looking at investing in projects and allocating funds and wondered if that was something to pursue. KT has forwarded the link to the office for RS/SAC to explore further.

13. Renewables – SAC raised an idea to obtain a consultation/ study on opportunities for the WHC on looking at renewable sources of energy with a view to seeing with some investment there would be ways to reduce our costs (especially electricity which has high cost/ large consumption). Initial estimates for the consultation would cost c£5k and the WHC were supportive of SAC pursuing this and seeing what opportunities may exist. SAC will explore alternative quotes and progress accordingly.
14. Port Marine Safety Code – SAC advised that an auditor will come in May and report to the WHC at the next meeting on findings. Additionally at the meeting they will also provide some training on how the PMSC operates and the various roles which are performed including their role and that of the Commissioners. SAC took an action to circulate more information to the Commissioners regarding the PMSC so as to help the WHC familiarise themselves about its construct and various elements. SAC then confirmed to the WHC that the risk assessments had all been refreshed, harmonised and made electronic so in future it will be simpler to refresh and review.
15. AGM – This was tentatively pencilled in for early May however SAC advised that given the measures of relaxation for COVID were expected to be beyond this date, holding the meeting face to face would be difficult. SAC suggested that we could produce the report and accounts as usual, produce a larger 'Haven' for the time being and look again later in the year to see if there is a chance to hold the meeting then. All thought this was a good idea and so RS/SAC will proceed along those lines.
16. Projects – There are opportunities to look at other projects – the extension on pontoon space, an alternative to the jetty on East Quay which after initial quotations that run into hundreds of thousands the idea is too expensive so alternative options are now underway. RS wanted to raise that there was an approach by some fisherman to look at farming Oysters, which under the 1972 Several Order held by the WHC it would be possible. RS wanted to stress the importance of the order and that it would be something in the future that should be looked to be renewed given it is a powerful document. The current order runs until 2033. To obtain renewal, ideas such as Oyster farming would provide good rationale to obtaining the order in future.

6. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

KT advised that the look out for a new Tractor was still ongoing – the 2 potential options looked at so far were either not suitable or went under offer before it could be looked at.

No other Commissioners had updates or further comments.

7. WHMT

Festival of Sport - SAC informed the WHC that discussion had continued but recently received an e-mail from them which looked like they had fulfilled their options by other means other than an introduction to the Paddleboard company which SAC undertook he would do. The sea cadets had made an approach directly offering volunteers and the safety boat so it seems our services in this regard will not be required. Janice Whittaker is still talking to local schools who will receive government support for summer activities so there still might be an avenue to see if there is still a package we could look at but obviously our leverage is much smaller now our involvement is less and the ability to attract discount has diminished accordingly.

Triathlon – the current advise from British Triathlon is events can only be held on a time trial basis at present which naturally for ourselves being tide dependant couldn't work. They expect to be able to review this further in line with Government response to the steps to relaxing lockdown measures but at present it is expected to be reviewed in June. SAC advised that as such it looks difficult to organise the event with such uncertainty and should we proceed like last year, should we have to refund, we stand to lose c£2k on bank fees. Add to that the Wells Carnival has also been cancelled there may be a local preference for it not to proceed anyhow. On this basis SAC recommended that the Triathlon is not run this year but perhaps look at an earlier date in 2022. WHC supported the recommendation accordingly.

8. AOB

None

9. Staff Matters

None

Meeting was then closed @ 20.29

Approved.....

Mel Catton

Date.....25TH MAY 2021