

MINUTES OF FULL MEETING OF WELLS HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS (WHC)

HARBOUR OFFICE

10th October 2023 AT 6:30PM

PRESENT: Mel Catton (MC) – Chair, Bob Ellis (BE), Karen Jones (KJ), Liam Pink (LP), Denys Hickey (DH), Sally Wynne (SW),

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

1. CHAIRMAN WELCOME

MC thanked all for attending.

2. APOLOGIES

Adrian Dwyer (AD), Nick Groom (NG), Ashley Mullenger (AM)

3. FINANCIALS

SAC referred the WHC to the monthly financial paper recording the management accounts for the half year. SAC explained that whilst the accounts show a YTD loss, because of the large depreciation charge, the business actually remains cash generative – or at least year to date it is. Overall, good progress on increasing revenue and cutting costs but there remains further work to do in both regards.

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 asked the WHC to refer to the paper tabled 'Harbour Executive Report' and turning to the first item;

1. 360th anniversary/Heritage Harbour;
 - a. The branded beer bottle was in production and now being presented to various outlets to sell.
 - b. Tide Gauge Project – the floor has arrived and awaiting installation. The current thought is to play the shipping forecast and 'tides of the staithe' rather than incur additional costs of using a production company.
 - c. Heritage Trial –We have paid the deposit for the app, so it is now with us to build the content and branding which is work in progress.
 - d. The commemorative painting by Godfrey Sayers has come back from the printers. The price will be £18 for the small print and £50 for the large more 'exclusive' print which RS will ask Godfrey to sign. Over the Christmas tide, MC thought it would be an idea to have a stall in the Maltings where we can display/sell the various merchandise we now have (25/26 Nov). MC enquired if we had a card payment machine which SAC confirmed we did and should work remotely from the office as it is 4G/wifi enabled.
 - e. The Dr Hicks memoirs is also going to the printers and the draft will be checked shortly before going into a full print run.

2. Albatros – The gantry installation was attempted the week after the triathlon however the size/design did not work and so an alternative solution will need to be found. LP suggested the gangway going down the side might work better. RS advised that he had spoken to the owner and advised him of the situation.
3. WHMT constitution – RS raised the situation regarding the WHMT which was originally established to encourage young people to get out on the water. Over the years this has proved more difficult given the bureaucracy and the lessening availability in wells of being able to support such activity (e.g no sailing school). RS suggested that perhaps the scope of the WHMT is reviewed and look more towards environmental learning/education, sustainability projects, like the lobster hatchery. SAC will circulate a paper on potential options/ idea to give the Trustees some potential avenues to explore further.
4. Crown Estates – RS informed the WHC that we had held a meeting with the Crown Estates who have an objective to ‘simplify’ the current arrangements into a single agreement/payment.
5. Car park barriers –the insurance claim is being dragged out by the claims assessor and it is not helped by Orbility – the car park company who are not very responsive either. SAC continues to progress albeit at a very slow pace.
6. Succession planning – SAC undertook the review of the HA role and the description/ advert has been published.
7. Lobster Hatchery – As previously mentioned by RS, the options regarding the Hatchery might include having it part of the trust but either way, ideally the hatchery can be scaled up into greater production and hopefully not cease in its operation which there is a danger of happening if a plan can’t be found once SAC leaves. There remains an ongoing possibility that an Oyster project may be interested in using part of the hatchery and the harbour which if did occur, it might be a way of supporting the hatchery also.
8. Wells Sailing Club tariff – There has been some e-mail exchanges already where the WSC recognise that the fee historically charged to them is very low and they too do not want to attract new members who are basically taking advantage of cheaper fees than if they had a mooring with the harbour.
9. Ardwinia Barge – RS reminded the WHC regarding a potential project earlier in the year where the current owners of the Ardwinia Barge were looking to re-home the vessel, potentially in Wells. The idea fell down as the original idea would have been too expensive/costly. RS believed the current owners were now looking at alternatives to just selling privately as they did not want the barge to turn into a liveaboard. RS suggested a small team is established to review to which KJ & LP said they would be interested in being part of.
10. East End pontoons – with the gantry of the Albatros becoming available RS thought there may be a way of using it as a staging gantry to run pontoons eastward from the slipway. The idea being the slipway would then have ‘sides’ which would make it easier to get boats in and out of the water and also provide a few moorings on the ‘inside’. RS also advised the WHC that we did have spare pontoons which could be used and thus wouldn’t prove to be a costly exercise for the WHC.

6. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Car Park - DH raised that he thought the pay machine wasn’t fit for purpose and unnecessarily complicated and the screen unreadable in the sunlight. SAC advised that it can’t be that bad as the machine had been used thousands of times without complaint. RS added that there was an issue with the sunlight but no solution had been found. MC also advised that the Town Council had not had any reports about the car park like we did under the previous system. It was left for DH to

investigate a potential solution which the WHC could look at to solve the perceived problem DH raised.

Flood talk – MC found the meeting held in the Maltings was very interesting, informative and brought many people up to speed with regards to how serious the issue is to Wells. MC then went on to say that it was good RS was in attendance as it was clear that his expertise and ability to comment on matters assisted in people fully understanding the causes and the potential solutions investigated for flood defence.

Pop-Inn restaurant alcohol license – MC said that a meeting was underway at the District Council to discuss the recent application for a license to which the original proposal made was objected to given the parameters being requested (late licence to 1am, sale of alcohol off premises, live/ late music). The meeting was still being held and no conclusion had been made at the time of the meeting but it was suspected the new / revised conditions should they be agreed be more acceptable than what was originally applied for.

Christmas Tide – MC advised the Christmas trees would be delivered 6th November. There was also an idea to run lights all along the quay front but in order to do so would require more support posts to avoid the light spans being too long. RS said that the harbour team would look into and see what could be done.

7. Staff Matters

None

8. AOB

Bad debt –. As a result of the invoice not being paid for so long, the accounting policy was to raise the invoice as unpaid and take a bad debt loss in the accounts which can be seen in the monthly report for this month. RS had advised that it was the WHC policy that all boats whether in the water or in the yard still had to pay their fees. SAC confirmed that it was in the T&C's and also specifically mentioned in the brochure which the Commissioners review each year and sign off on. Given that no other boat in the harbour had failed to pay these fees including those that were in the yard rather than in the water there should be no exceptions. The Commissioners concurred. SAC was requested to draft a letter explaining this, giving until the year end. An update will be provided in November's meeting.

Meeting was then closed @ 20.45

Approved.....

Mel Catton

Date.....30/1/24.....