

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Southwold Harbour Management Committee** held in the Stella Peskett Millenium Hall, on **Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 4:00 PM**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Maurice Cook, Mr Richard Musgrove, Mr Mike Pickles, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

Other Members present:

Councillor David Beavan

Officers present:

Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Madeline Fallon (Senior Coastal Advisor), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

Others present:

Amy Savage (Principal Consultant, Royal HaskoningDHV)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from David Gledhill.

The Chairman reported that Alastair MacFarlane had resigned from the Harbour Management Committee to take up the role of General Manager - Harbour Lands with the Council. The Chairman confirmed that a new co-opted member would be appointed.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 July 2022 be agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

4 Update from Royal Haskoning

The meeting received a presentative from Amy Savage, Principal Consultant at Royal HaskoningDHV, on the Southwold Harbour Investment Plan. The presentation covered the project conclusions, including options for the harbour entrance structures, and proposals for dredging of the shoal bank and channel narrowing.

Mrs Savage summarised the project aims which were to develop an investment plan for the harbour to ensure future operations and survivability. The main issues to be addressed were the poor condition of the South Pier, mooring conditions at the North Wall and the influence of the future estuary tidal prism.

Mrs Savage summarised the modelling so far, including what would happen if no action was taken and the impact of the entrance structure failure on the town of Southwold and the wider estuary. The entrance structures had a residual life of <10 years for the South Pier, and >30 for the North Pier (assuming the South Pier was repaired).

Ms Savage stated that at present the preferred option for the South Pier was to replace it with a rock breakwater which would improve conditions in the entrance and at the North Wall. Additional design work was needed to refine the plan to replace the South Pier, including the alignment of the replacement structure and the positioning of culverts (to replicate the tidal flow through the 'windows' in the existing structure), and whether dredging in the channel could be included as part of these works and what the impact of this would be. Construction costs would then need to be updated to reflect the increases in construction costs in the last two years.

Mr Pickles asked whether the Environment Agency were managing the banks on the estuary or not. Officers confirmed that they were beginning to withdraw from management, those in the Harbour were being maintained at present, but they had withdrawn upstream. Mrs Savage confirmed that they might be managing banks by clearing vegetation, they may not be undertaking more extensive maintenance work or making repairs.

The Head of Operations confirmed he would speak with the Environment Agency on behalf of the Council and the Committee to confirm what their strategy was to the management and maintenance of the estuary.

Mr Pickles asked what protection the South Pier provided aside from protecting the North Pier. Mrs Savage confirmed it did reduce wave penetration into the Harbour and at the north Wall, and limited sediment movement into the Harbour.

Mrs Savage summarised another option which had been considered as part of the study to narrow the channel opposite the North Wall to reduce water levels upstream. Other issues that needed to be addressed were the flood risk to the Harbour Road and

neighbouring businesses, taking into account sea level rise, and the risk of failure of the estuary banks.

With regards to dredging of the shoal bank, this had not yet been fully assessed or modelled. Mrs Savage summarised the initial comments on the benefits and constraints of doing this. The bank did not appear to be growing, and feeling was that if it was removed it would not come back quickly, although it could reform if there was a significant storm or similar event. Mrs Savage commented that the entrance channel was fairly stable at the moment and as a result it was likely that the bank would not reform in the short term, but more work would need to be done to confirm this and the impact of dredging on the flow rates, general silting and the position of the main channel.

Mr Pickles asked how much debris entered the Harbour from Dunwich Creek. Mrs Savage confirmed that the initial surveys had included samples from around the entrance to the Creek, but not within the Creek itself.

Councillor Cook commented that the benefits of dredging seemed to outweigh the risks, and would allow easier access to the Harbour by both businesses and visitors and make the North Wall more usable.

The Head of Operations summarised that there seemed to be a consensus on changes to the South Pier and dredging, but more work needed to be done on the modelling. Subject to modelling, this could be moved forward more quickly than other projects. With regards to protections for Harbour Road this was more difficult and would take more work to look at the impact of this on businesses and access. Works further upstream would require a lot more work as they included land which was outside the harbour's control, and would require discussions with other agencies.

Mrs Savage confirmed that the existing South Pier structure would not have to be totally removed but could form part of the new structure.

Councillor Beavan referred to an inner breakwater and extending the narrow channel, and commented that the two could work well together. He added that he would be concerned about dredging upsetting the equilibrium of the Harbour and having unintended consequences. Mrs Savage commented that how the options would work together was not clear yet, and work needed to be done to see how all the options would work in more detail so work could begin.

The Head of Operations confirmed he would discuss the extra modelling options with Royal HaskoningDHV for the shoal bank and refine the options for the channel narrowing alongside this.

5 Caravan Site Consultation

The Head of Operations introduced report **ES/1281** which provided an update on plans for consultation on redevelopment of the Southwold Caravan and Campsite. The Committee's working group had met and identified a number of areas for consultation.

Consultation would be open to Southwold Caravan and Campsite Association members, locals and visitors to feedback on.

Draft questions were contained in the report. The Head of Operations confirmed that the questions would be adjusted in consultation with Councillor Smith and the working group to provide additional background information and make it clear to responders what each question referred to. Subject to further refining of these questions the consultation would start in the next week.

Councillor Smith commented that it was important to improve communication with the caravan park as part of the wider works on the site and that she would be looking to achieve this through the working group going forward.

There being no further questions, on the proposal of Councillor Ritchie and seconded by Councillor Smith it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That the Harbour Management Committee (HMC) recommend that the Leader of the Council approves a consultation on the Southwold Caravan and Campsite.

6 Southwold Harbour Revision Order - application and consultation

Clerks note: Councillor Rivett joined the meeting at 17:22 during this item but did not vote on the recommendations.

The Head of Operations introduced report ES/1282 which summarised the draft Harbour Revision Order (HRO) submission.

The purpose of the HRO was to update the 1933 Harbour Order which was no longer fit for purpose, to provide additional protections and powers for the Harbour, and to put the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Harbour Management Committee on a statutory footing.

The Head of Operations summarised discussions with the Stakeholder Advisory Group on HRO. Two main points had been made concerning the sale of land, and the area in which Harbour funds could be spent on defence and similar works.

Regarding the sale of land, the Advisory Group had been concerned about the inclusion of the option to sell Harbour lands. As the advisors on the HRO process, Ashfords had stated that the purpose of the Order was to benefit the Harbour and ensure that it could be sustainably managed going forward. With these aims in mind it was feasible that land might need to be sold in the future. The Head of Operations stated that the Advisory Groups main concern was that assets could be stripped from the Harbour. The draft HRO contained protections against this, including restrictions on selling land and assets which benefitted the Harbour and were essential to its running. The Stakeholder Advisory Group and Harbour Management Committee would both need to be consulted on any future sales, and should this process not be followed there could be a judicial review.

With regards to the spending of funds outside the Harbour limits, an additional form of words had been added in Article 6 (Works in the River) which permitted the Council to carry out works on areas of the estuary outside of the harbour with the purpose to protect the Harbour. This area been defined in the Draft HRO as the area upstream of the Harbour from the bailey bridge to the A12. Some members of the Advisory Group were of the view that this area could be extended to Holton, but the Marine Management Organisation(MMO) would have to be satisfied that the Harbour could generate the income to fund these works, which would result in fees and rents being increased. The Head of Operations added that it would also be difficult to prove to the MMO that this area was essential to the functioning of the Harbour.

The Head of Operations confirmed that Salt Creek and Bus Creek had been removed from the draft Harbour Revision Order as it was not clear whether they had a function as part of the Harbour, were not navigable and were not owned by the Council. If during consultation it was felt that these areas were important to the Harbour they could be put back in.

The Chairman stated that at the last meeting the point had been very clearly made that putting a prevention on selling land would be the wrong thing to do. The Harbour Order at present did allow the Council to sell land and assets without any oversight, and the HRO would prevent this. The Chairman also made the point that the Council might want to purchase land in the future but would not be able to if this provision was not put in. With regards to the areas further upstream, the Chairman agreed that this was important and needed to be discussed as part of the consultation period.

Mr Pickles agreed that the HRO should enable the Harbour Management Committee and the Council to act as flexibility as possible, and decision making going forward should not be cut off. Mr Musgrove agreed felt that the HRO included sufficient checks and balances to protect interests.

The Chairperson of the Advisory Group commented that adding in the option to sell land as part of the HRO would be wrong in the opinion of the Advisory Group and that whilst the Council might not want to sell anything at present this might change going forward.

The Chairman stated that he appreciated the concerns of the Advisory Group and that this was a sensitive area based on the past issues, but that he was certain that there were checks in place in law to ensure that the Harbour did not either over extend itself or sell assets which contributed to the Harbour.

The Head of Operations stated that should there be disagreement between the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Harbour Management Committee, the MMO would want to see both groups looking to compromise.

There being no further comments, on the proposal of Councillor Ritchie and seconded by Mr Pickles it was

RESOLVED

That the Harbour Management Committee recommends that the Leader of the Council

1. Approves the application of a Harbour Revision Order
2. Approves the launch of a consultation on the Harbour Revision Order
3. Approves the attached documents as part of the Harbour Revision Order submission

7 Update from the Committee's Working Groups

The Chairman invited the working groups to provide an update.

Councillor Cook summarised the work of the working harbour group. The group had suggested a number of options to Officers concerning navigation, visitor mooring locations and the turning point, energy and water supply to moorings on both sides of the river. The group had also discussed the road surface and the north wall.

The Head of Operations confirmed that officers were visiting the harbour in the next week to look at these options, and reports would be brought to the working group and Committee as appropriate.

The compliance working group would be visiting the harbour with a view to looking at issues including lighting and transport/pedestrian safety. There was a great deal of work that needed to be done behind the scenes on compliance and the new General Manager would be looking at this.

The Chair of the compliance working group had resigned from the Committee to take up the role of General Manager and so a new Chair would need to be appointed. Councillor Ritchie proposed that Richard Musgrove Chair the working group, this was seconded by Councillor Rivett and agreed by the Committee.

8 Update from the Stakeholder Advisory Group

The Chairperson of the Stakeholder Advisory Group was invited to provide an update.

The Chairperson commented that the processes between the groups seemed to be working, and that he was pleased that the Advisory Group was involved in the working groups and the report from Royal Haskoning DHV. Whilst the group did not fully agree with all recommendations they would continue to be part of the process.

The Chairperson and Councillor Beavan had met with the Deputy Chief Finance Officer to get clarity on the reporting of the accounts to see how this could be made clearer to people going forward.

The Chairperson commented on the reports of sewerage in the Harbour, there were areas where this was a concern. The Head of Operations stated that this was being managed by Environmental Services and that he would see what was being done and update the group. Mr Pickles commented that there were three septic tanks behind businesses in the harbour and when there was a surge these overflowed which contributed to the issues.

9 Work Programme

The Committee considered the forward work programme. The Chairman noted that Ashfords would attend the October meeting to update on the Harbour Revision Order consultation.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The dates of the next meetings were noted as 20 October 2022, 24 November 2022, 12 January 2023 and 9 March 2023.

The meeting concluded at 6.14pm

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Chairman