

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Southwold Harbour Management Committee** held in the Stella Peskett Millennium Hall, Southwold on **Thursday, 12 January 2023 at 4.00pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Maurice Cook, Mr Richard Musgrove, Mr John Ogden, Mr Mike Pickles, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Mary Rudd

Other Members present:

Councillor David Beavan

Officers present:

Sharon Bleese (Resilient Coastal Communities and Businesses Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Alastair MacFarlane (General Manager, Southwold Harbour), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

Others present:

Ian Bradbury (Southwold Town Council), Simon Flunder (Chair, Stakeholder Advisory Group), Marcus Gladwell (Stakeholder Advisory Group), Vicky Gladwell (Stakeholder Advisory Group)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from David Gledhill, Councillor Craig Rivett and Councillor Letitia Smith.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Minutes

On the proposition of Councillor Rudd, seconded by Councillor Cook, it was by a majority vote

RESOLVED

That, subject to amending the attendance to remove Councillor Maurice Cook as his apologies were recorded for the meeting, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Cook introduced report **ES/1314** which provided an overview of financial performance against approved budgets as at Quarter 3 for the 2022/23 financial year.

Councillor Cook summarised the updated figures contained in the report, noting there had been additional touring income during the third quarter and that the combined position showed a favourable variance of £13,000 to end that period, excluding the income received in advance of Quarter 4.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the year-end forecast appended to the report. The Committee was advised that the net surplus was expected to be £196,000, compared to a budget of £141,000. Councillor Cook highlighted that there had been an underspend on premises costs.

The Committee was informed that an internal review of data support charges had been completed and this remained in line with the previous financial year.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee. Mr Pickles queried the higher than expected car parking income; the Deputy Chief Finance Officer highlighted that caution had been taken when budgeting for car park income and this could be revised in the next budget. In response to a follow-up question, the General Manager advised that the land used for parking near the pub was East Suffolk Council land but not harbour land.

The Chairman asked if caution on car park income related to the recent national lockdowns in response to COVID-19. The Deputy Chief Finance Officer confirmed that additional caution had been taken in response to this but caution was often taken when budgeting in relation to car park income.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from the floor. Mr Flunder, Chairman of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) thanked officers for the amount of information provided and said it was a major change to be able to see ongoing monthly accounts and the future budget. Mr Flunder noted that the SAG was concerned that the projected surplus for the 2022/23 financial year was considerably lower than the £330,000 surplus achieved in 2021/22; he noted the analysis of the changes but was concerned about the £74,000 cost against Southwold Harbour and other charges appearing to be quite high. Mr Flunder noted that 30 pitches on the caravan park remained unfilled and associated the financial impact of this with the reduction in the surplus. Mr Flunder said there was some disquiet about the results and forward projections.

The General Manager explained that the surplus was not reducing, but but was not increasing at the same rate. The Chairman added that the transition phase for Southwold Harbour had contributed to this and Councillor Cook considered the current position to be satisfactory. Councillor Cook said there was a need to improve the facilities available to encourage business to return; he acknowledged the frustration with how long this would take but highlighted the importance of this work being completed to increase income generated.

On the proposition of Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Rudd, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That having reviewed financial performance against approved budgets as at Quarter 3 for 2022/23, the report be noted.

5 Draft Budget 2023/2024

Councillor Cook introduced report **ES/1411**, which presented the draft budget for the 2023/24 financial year for recommendation to the Cabinet.

Councillor Cook referred to the requirement to recommend the draft budget to the Cabinet, per the Committee's terms of reference. The Committee was reminded that it had considered the schedule of charges at its meeting on 24 November 2022 and had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 3 January 2023.

Councillor Cook outlined the budget detail in the report and highlighted the key changes; an additional £35,000 revenue costs was allowed for in respect of the Capital Programme and the contract staffing costs had been increased to £43,000 to cover actual costs. Councillor Cook added that there was an increased budget for overtime and that utilities had been reduced as it had been significantly higher than what was required.

The Committee was informed there had been some revisions to recharges but overall this was in line with the 2022/23 financial year. A surplus of £35,400 was ringfenced for harbour activities. Councillor Cook noted that the East Suffolk Council general fund budget would be set at its meeting in February 2023.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee. The General Manager was able to confirm that Southwold Harbour had a very good three-year utilities deal and it was acceptable to reduce that element of the budget.

The Chairman invited questions from the floor. Mr Flunder, Chairman of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), reiterated the points he had made during the previous item. The SAG's frustrations at the pace of improvements was acknowledged and the General Manager advised that the Council had gone to tender for an architectural landscape visualisation as part of improving the caravan park and bringing it to legal and industry standards, ahead of undertaking a public consultation on proposed improvements.

Mr Flunder said these improvements had been discussed by the SAG, which was concerned about potential changes to the character of the caravan park and hoped this would be taken into account when developing proposals. Councillor Cook and the General Manager both assured Mr Flunder that it was not intended to destroy the character of the caravan park but to improve the facilities and bring it up to an acceptable industry standard, and costs would not be put on to end users to bring this about.

The General Manager confirmed that the £74,000 costs against the Harbour related to improvements to staging and defensive maintenance, and that this may not be spent in its entirety.

Councillor Beavan, Ward Member for Southwold, highlighted the dispute on the ownership of the camping field and asked that should it be proved that the Council owned the land, it would not charge rent. The Strategic Director confirmed there were no plans to levy a charge on the land.

On the proposition of Councillor Cook, seconded by Mr Musgrove, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That having reviewed and commented upon the draft 2023/24 Budget for the Harbour Account, at Appendix B to the report, it be recommended to Cabinet.

6 Marine Safety Management System

The General Manager introduced report **ES/1412**, which set out the proposed Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) prior to presentation to and approval by Cabinet.

The Committee was advised that as part of ensuring Southwold Harbour was fully compliant with legislative and health & safety requirements, ABPmer had been appointed as the Harbour's designated person to review the current MSMS against the Marine Safety Code (the Code). The General Manager noted that although having a MSMS in place was not a statutory requirement, the Harbour could be prosecuted in the event of an accident if there was no good reason for having a MSMS, citing an incident at Clyde involving fatalities which had resulted in prosecution.

The General Manager confirmed that ABPmer's gap analysis had identified 33 items required under the Code and had recommended that the MSMS be overhauled. The General Manager advised that he had worked with ABPmer to review published MSMSs across the UK and produce the document presented to the Committee. The Committee was informed that the Harbour had adopted the Council's policies on enforcement and environment and that the General Manager had worked with the relevant Council officers to amend wording in the MSMS to reflect the Harbour's legal position.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee. Mr Pickles noted an unseaworthy boat currently located in the Harbour; the General Manager confirmed that issues such as this would be dealt with by way of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which would cascade from the MSMS. There was some discussion on the definition of pleasure vessels by length and the difficulty to enforce issues relating to dangerous vessels in this respect; the General Manager noted this but said the length of 24 metres was specified in legislation.

Mr Pickles urged caution when naming Harbour Marine Services in relation to hot works. The General Manager said he felt it appropriate as Harbour Marine Services

were by far the largest tenant of Southwold Harbour and regularly engaged in hot work; the General Manager confirmed that standing time period permissions were being explored for hot works to simplify things for all parties. The General Manager added that the SOPs would be brought to the Committee.

The General Manager stated that operating hours needed to be stated to avoid ambiguity, and it would not be viable to operate Southwold Harbour on a 24/7 basis.

The Chairman invited comments from the floor. Mr Flunder, Chairman of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) was supportive of the MSMS document but cautioned it should be implemented in a balanced way. Mr Gladwell, a member of the SAG, added that he agreed with the comments on tonnage and asked if there would be a procedure to allow towing in the Harbour in emergency situations; the General Manager advised this would be included in the SOPs. In response to a question from Councillor Beavan, the General Manager confirmed small-scale towing, such as the Sailing Club safetyboat, would be permitted.

The Chairman confirmed there was support throughout the Cabinet for the proposed MSMS and thanked the General Manager and Mr Musgrove for their hard work on the report.

On the proposition of Mr Musgrove, seconded by Mr Pickles, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That having commented on the Marine Safety Management System documentation, it be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

7 Work Programme

The Committee noted the forward work programme. The Chairman advised that updates from the Working Groups could be received under this item, as these groups generated future business for the Committee.

Health, Safety and Compliance Working Group

Mr Musgrove said that issues identified during the October 2022 site visit were being progressed by the General Manager as far as possible. The Working Group had recently met and it had been recommended to Cabinet that Southwold Harbour join the British Port Authority, Port Safety and Safety Port and Skills. An aids to navigation workshop had also been completed, alongside a landslide hazard workshop. The General Manager said he would ask Democratic Services to set up a meeting to look at the outcomes of these workshops.

Working Harbour Working Group

Councillor Cook reported that the Working Group had recently met and had been pleased to hear progress was being made on fishing and visitor moorings. The review

of costs was progressing and it had been highlighted there was a need for bathroom facilities nearer to the visitor moorings and this had been discussed at the meeting.

Councillor Cook noted the issues around the bund footpath on the Walberswick side of the Harbour, which Suffolk County Council was responsible for upkeep; a meeting had been held with the Environment Agency and it had been agreed to restrict access but leave this under the control of Southwold Harbour.

Caravan and Campsite Working Group

Councillor Cook reported that good discussions were taking place on issues, including proposals for a landscaping plan. Councillor Cook acknowledged that the pace of this work was slow and it was unlikely any work would happen on the site before Autumn 2023. At the meeting, Councillor Smith had stressed the need to communicate well with caravan owners.

Southwold Harbour Investment Plan (SHIP) Working Group

Mr Musgrove noted the last Working Group meeting had been cancelled; the next meeting was due to take place on 6 February 2023.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Mr Flunder said there was no further updates from the SAG beyond what he had raised during the meeting. Mr Flunder thanked the Committee for the opportunity to make points as the meeting progressed.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The dates of the next meeting were noted as being 23 February 2023 and 9 March 2023.

9 Exempt/Confidential Items

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Rudd, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

10 Exempt Minutes of meeting

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting concluded at 5.15pm.

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Chairman