



Stakeholder Advisory Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 at 1.30pm remotely via Teams

Attendees:

Core membership - Jocelyn Bailey (Southwold Caravan Owners Association), Cllr Josie Bassinette (Walberswick Parish Council), Gary Doy (RNLI), Simon Drake (Commercial Fishermen), Simon Flunder (Southwold Haven Port Stakeholders Group), Marcus Gladwell (Commercial passenger vessels), Vicky Gladwell (Shoreside businesses), Cllr Philip O’Hear (Reydon Parish Council), Diane Perry-Yates (Southwold Caravan Owners Association), Richard Steward (Blyth Estuary Partnership), Jamie Thompson (Southwold and River Blyth Users Association), Alan Tong (Local residents), Henry Walker (Southwold Sailing Club), Richard Wilkes (Environment Agency)

ESC Councillors – Cllr Maurice Cook (Vice Chair, Harbour Management Committee)

Others present (non-voting) – Kerry Blair (ESC Head of Operations), Alli Stone (ESC Democratic Services Officer), Nicola Wotton (ESC Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Cllr Cook welcomed attendees to the meeting and gave an overview of the aims and role of the Harbour Management Committee and the Advisory Group, which was to ensure a sustainable future for the harbour through investment and improvement in the customer offer of both the harbour and caravan park.</p> <p>Cllr Cook reiterated that the HMC were taking this project seriously, ensuring that any changes were successful and well supported. A capital programme for the next four years was due to be presented to the Council including a £14 million investment for the harbour.</p> <p>Meeting attendees introduced themselves and the groups they were representing.</p> <p>Cllr Philip O’Hear (PO) raised the importance of taking a holistic view of the wider estuary and area and not just considering the harbour in isolation.</p>

<p>2</p>	<p>Election of a Chairman of the Southwold Advisory Group</p> <p>Simon Flunder, interim Chairperson for the start of the meeting, invited nominations for Chair for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.</p> <p>Diane Perry-Yates nominated herself for the position of Chairperson.</p> <p>Richard Steward nominated Simon Flunder, which was duly seconded by Philip O’Hear. There being no further nominations, Simon Flunder was duly elected as Chairperson for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Election of a Vice-Chairman of the Southwold Advisory Group</p> <p>Simon Drake nominated Diane Perry-Yates for the position of Vice Chairperson and this was seconded by Jocelyn Bailey.</p> <p>Richard Steward nominated Philip O’Hear for the position of Vice Chairperson and this was seconded by Josie Bassinette.</p> <p>Upon being put to the vote, Philip O’Hear was elected Vice Chairperson for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence. Cllr Will Windell (Southwold Town Council) was not in attendance.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>The role of the Southwold Harbour Management Committee and its working groups</p> <p>Simon Flunder (SF) stated that he hoped that this first meeting would be the start of the harbour users being more involved as the Harbour Management Committee in shaping the future use of the harbour.</p> <p>Kerry Blair (KB) summarised the reasons behind setting up the Harbour Management Committee (HMC). This was a form of governance that had been promoted by the Department of Transport and the Good Governance Guide for Ports with the aim of involving a wide group of decision makers in harbour management decisions.</p> <p>KB summarised the Terms of Reference and main responsibilities of the HMC which were to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree a budget for harbour, • make decisions about investment and timescales for works, • oversee health and safety, • create a business plan for the harbour, and • prioritise works and investment.

KB clarified that at present, the Council was restricted to considering works up to the Bailey Bridge, but this remit could be widened with a Harbour Revision Order which both the Advisory Group and Harbour Management Committee would consider. He recognised the importance of considering the impact of works in the harbour on the wider area.

Meetings of the HMC were open to the public and held in Southwold. Confidential matters would occasionally be considered and these mostly concerned sensitive commercial information such as rents, but the intention was to make as much available to the public as possible.

Working groups had been set up by the HMC to focus on specific pieces of work outside of the formal committee structure. The working groups could not make decisions but would report options to the HMC.

The working groups were as follows:

- Compliance Working Group Membership – to focus on Health and Safety, Security, processes, and procedures.
- Caravan Site Working Group Membership – to focus on income generation for the Caravan Site.
- Working Harbour Working Group – to focus on income generation for the Harbour.
- Southwold Harbour Investment Plan (SHIP) Working Group – to focus on future projects and investment for the Harbour.

There was a discussion on how the Advisory Group could best feedback to the HMC.

- PO asked whether the members of the advisory group could be involved in working group meetings. Cllr Cook (MC) agreed that the advisory group should be involved in the HMC working groups.
- PO asked whether a public question session could be added as a standing item to HMC meetings. MC confirmed this had been considered but was ruled out during the early stages of the creation of the HMC.
- MC suggested that the Advisory Group meet between each HMC meeting to allow them to consider and comment on business before it was considered by the HMC and raise any issues for the HMC work plan. The meeting agreed with this approach.
- Diane Perry-Yates (DPY) asked that draft reports were provided in good time so that members could seek the opinions of their user groups before making comments. She also stressed the importance of the caravan site in income generation for the area.

ACTION: Democratic Services to confirm publication deadlines for HMC meetings and suggest Advisory Group meeting dates to coincide.

There was some discussion on how investment in and profits from the harbour were managed.

- Cllr Josie Bassinette (JB) asked whether profits from the commercial operations of the harbour were earmarked for spending in Southwold or if they could be used elsewhere. KB confirmed that an overhead was taken out to cover staffing costs, everything else was ringfenced for use within the limits of the Harbour Order. This was detailed in the harbour accounts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alan Tong asked for confirmation of how investment from the Council would work in the harbour, with particular regard to payment of borrowing costs. MC confirmed that investment came from three areas: outside grants, council revenue or borrowing. Generally, investment was a combination of the three. When borrowing was required there would be a cost and this would always be reflected in project costs and would be detailed in business cases. The Council was not permitted to take any money above and beyond what was necessary under the Harbour Order.
6	<p>The role of the Southwold Advisory Group and its Terms of Reference</p> <p>KB summarised the Terms of Reference which had been provided to the Advisory Group.</p> <p>He stressed the importance of the role of the Advisory group in commenting on and informing the large decisions that the Harbour Management Committee would need to take.</p>
7	<p>Review of the Southwold Harbour Management Committee's Work Programme</p> <p>The HMC work programme had been provided to the Advisory group for comment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PO asked if Lara Moore (Legal Director, Ashfords LLP) could attend a virtual Advisory Group meeting prior to the March 10 HMC meeting to discuss the Harbour Revision order. DPY asked whether the recruitment process for the Harbour and Asset Manager had begun. KB confirmed that the post would need to be approved by the HMC before recruitment could begin and recognised that this meeting of the Advisory Group and HMC had not coincided to allow for full feedback to be given. Information would be shared with the Stakeholder group on the recruitment process. SF asked that the Advisory Group and HMC also consider the staffing and resource available to the Harbour and Asset Manager to ensure that sufficient resource was available to deliver the needed projects. KB agreed and stated that the staffing structure around this post had been picked up in the paper to the HMC.
8	<p>Future Business of the Southwold Advisory Group</p> <p>Jamie Thompson and Marcus Gladwell raised issues around parking, the current parking order in place from Suffolk County Council and maintenance of the roads and car parks at the harbour. Kerry Blair confirmed that he would be in contact with the Harbour Master about what could be done in the short term to fix this.</p> <p>Henry Walker asked if the Advisory Group could be more involved with the working groups as discussed earlier to help shape options as they were created.</p> <p>Richard Steward raised the possibility of a storm surge impacting the harbour and the estuary, and the need for works on the walls at the harbour to protect the harbour and other areas.</p>

	<p>Diane Perry-Yates stated that the Caravan site users were keen to be a part of discussions and for the caravan site to move forward and develop to encourage more users.</p> <p>Richard Wilkes reiterated the Environment Agency's support for the HMC and Advisory Group, and for the opportunity to be involved with other stakeholders. He reiterated the importance of getting in touch with the EA for any works around the harbour. Concerns had been raised on the embankment at the harbour and the potential for slips, trips, and falls and the EA would be consulting on improvements as soon as solutions had been identified.</p> <p>Alan Tong agreed that the embankment was an issue and asked if the EA plans could be shared with this group. He also raised health and safety concerns about the public mooring which were no longer fit for purpose. If work was done in this area, then work could also be done to protect some of the lower points of the harbour.</p>
9	<p>Future Meetings</p> <p>The meeting agreed that an early afternoon meeting was preferable, dates would be confirmed to coincide with the HMC meeting schedule.</p>