

BRANDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Minute of the meeting held on Monday 30th May 2022 at 5.00pm, in Brandeston Village Hall.

Present: *Councillors B Baker, Fletcher, Locke, Summers (in the Chair), Clerk Catherine Bacon and nine members of the public.*

2/22-23/1 The chairman welcomed Councillors and the members of the public to the meeting. The Chair told the attendees that the core matter to be discussed was not personal and that the Parish Council explore and meet to discuss items with the best interest of the village/parishioners at heart. That once a vote is taken and a decision made, it is best to leave the topic and personal opinions in the room, we are a small community and it would be a shame to have differences of opinion get in the way of relationships.

2/22-23/2 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bange (work), Fletcher (work) and Williams (work). It was resolved that this was accepted.

2/22-23/3 There were no Declarations of Interest

2/22-23/4 The Chair explained that the public each had 3 minutes to speak. After which they would not have an opportunity to speak unless questions are put to them by the Parish Council.

The representative for the Queen stated aid that they had little to add following the Parish Council meeting held on 16th May. They wished to reiterate the family's devotion to the pub, particularly during Covid with the introduction of a shop. They wish to sell the pub as a going concern and do not wish hinder the continuation of the pub from running in the future. They repeated their recent offer for open dialogue with the Parish Council.

A parishioner spoke as a regular user of the pub. He had read up on Assets of Community Value (ACV) in order to have a better understanding and did not believe that an ACV would be a bad process to undertake. If the pub was sold as a going concern, then there would be no issue regarding the ACV. He believes than an ACV shows that the village see the pub as an asset and doesn't see it as an attack on the pub and it's the owners. He had also heard that the pub had been for sale for 6 months. He has become aware that the deeds for the pub have been separated from the land adjacent and was interested to understand why this had occurred.

Another parishioner is keen to see the pub as ongoing asset. He felt that the removal of the pub would detract from the village. He raised concerns as to how the village would raise funds to acquire the pub and have the resources to run it if the village came into a position to buy. He wished to remind everyone that it affects the people behind the business and not just the business itself.

The representative of the pub was given time to respond to the issues raised. The family has found the past few years challenging and have come to the end of their time to run the pub. They were guided to market the pub privately first for continuity of the business. The sale may well go public soon. The glamping site has apparently had some issues, including visits from ESC. Last year they were served a noise abatement notice and one further notice would see the site closed (exact details of the noise abatement notice not provided). The glamping business does not make money but aims to bring business to the pub. The glamping site is a time-consuming part of the business, taking employees away from the running of the pub, with the chef multi-tasking also undertaking the cleaning of the glamping facilities.

A parishioner raised two points. The first point raised being that the family running the pub have worked hard and that no one doubts their efforts, but this does not guarantee the pub's future. The second point he raised was the ACV, he noted that a business may wish to continue a business on the site but not necessarily a Public House.

Cllr B Baker asked the representative of the pub where they plan to put the profits from the potential housing development behind the pub. The representative stated that this would be used to recoup some of the losses occurred recently.

Cllr Summers asked why the owners believed an ACV would hinder the sale of the pub, stating that the PCs believed that the ACV would be removed once the sale has been completed as a going concern. The representative responded that this was not what they had been advised but accepted the findings of the Parish Council.

2/22-23/5 It was resolved that the Chairman should sign the Minute of the Meeting held on 16th May 2022 as a true and accurate record.

22/22-23/6 The Chair reported that Cllrs Fletcher and Summers initially commenced looking into ACV, then joined by B Baker investing considerable time in exploring the Localities Act, and additional input from PC Bange. Summers, Fletcher and Baker then met to establish the criteria, to identify the pros and cons of ACV. Their findings and links were circulated to the Cllrs. Cllr B Baker read a summary of the findings as follows:

The pub has been an important part of the village for hundreds of years. It has hosted a diverse range of events, parties and celebrations. It is a core part of our village life, a community hub. For instance, during Covid it reinvented itself as a village shop and well done for that imaginative move. Of course, key to the success of all these activities and of benefit to the pub, has been the support the village has shown to the pub. Such as, the Village Hall Committee agreeing to locate the fete at the pub, instead of at the village hall.

Thus, the pub is an asset to the village, but it is not an asset of the village. The village does not have a right to its pub. The Queen is a business and the owners took a financial risk when they put their money into it, both at purchase and with the further investments made, such as the refurbishment of the barn.

Moving to recent events, an application to develop part of the pub's land into two houses prompted concern among some parishioners about the future of the whole site. Broadly, these were along the lines of, "Is this the thin end of the wedge, leading to the pub closing and becoming a residential development?" Such concerns prompted calls for the parish council to look into the matter and, in particular, explore whether having the Queen listed as an Asset of Community Value, which I will refer to as ACV from now on, would help to safeguard the future of the pub.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the pub has been bought and sold a number of times over the previous decade. Those changes of ownership did not, as far as I am aware, prompt the strength of feelings expressed in communications seen recently. It is a duty of the parish council to consider these opinions. So, against this backdrop of novel, sincere and strong concerns about the future of the pub, several members of the parish council looked into ACVs and I am reporting back with some summary views.

I will not attempt to go through every aspect of the legislation covering ACVs, relevant documents are easily found on UK government websites and include parts of Localities Act 2011. Links have been emailed to the parish council members.

As we understand it, the key element of having the pub listed as an ACV is that in the event of a proposed sale following or during closure, the community would have the right to put in an offer to purchase the pub to continue operating it as a pub, and there is moratorium period following that application. That is it, that is all legislation offers. The ACV is only there to provide communities with an opportunity to bid to maintain access to a facility in the event of its ceasing to trade as a pub. Moreover, it is worth noting the owner does not have to accept the community's bid; they can sit out the moratorium and then sell to whoever they like or not. Further, and important in the current situation, an ACV listing has no effect, it does not put a brake on the process of selling the pub when it is being sold as a going concern. The sale of a going concern is, we believe, exempt from the ACV bid-and-moratorium process.

As such, an ACV listing is not perhaps the big bad bogeyman it is sometimes portrayed as. A listing may be a material consideration in planning applications, it may act as a hurdle if the use of the pub as a pub looks to be threatened. But, to the extent the pub is to be sold as a pub and not a re-development opportunity, this can hardly be cited as an issue. For the purchase of the pub as a going concern, the listing is no impediment to either the buying or the running of the pub as such.

Indeed, far from being detrimental, it may be seen as a positive. It could be argued that a listing demonstrates to a potential buyer that there is strong support for the pub within the village, sending a good, positive, welcoming signal to someone interested in running the pub; that they would be buying into an established institution that the village value and will continue to support. Otherwise, they can only go on the pub's accounts and their impression from a visit. After all, with over a dozen pubs for sale in Suffolk alone at the moment, wouldn't you want to buy one that you know locals are keen to support and passionate about?

Exploring listing the pub as an ACV is about the parish council acting on behalf of the village parishioners to safeguard the pub as a going concern. Ensuring the Queen remains commercially viable with an asset base of the pub and surrounding land will not only ensure it stays a vibrant part of our community, but could give future operators the chance to run a comfortably profitable entity. That should help a lot to keep it open and alive.

The Cllrs voted on whether or not to submit an application to apply to register the Queen pub together with the land adjoining the Queen as an ACV. A majority voted in favour of submitting an application. **It was resolved that the Clerk submit an application to register the Queen pub together with the land adjoining the Queen as an ACV.**

2/22-23/7 Planning

- a) **DC/3535/RB7FWSQXKQCOC, Tyes Cottage 15 Low Street Brandeston Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 7AN. Listed Building Consent - Alterations to provide a ground floor cloakroom, replacement staircase to bedroom 2. New first floor basin and bath, with a replacement window to match existing**

The Chair checked that all the Cllrs have had an opportunity to read the application. As holders of the Planning Portfolio, Cllrs Fletcher and Summers had discussed the planning application, they could see merit in the adaptations of the property to modernise its facilities/use. None of the Cllrs had any questions or comments, the Chair proposed that the PC return a 'no comment' and leave it to the listed building and conservation officers to liaise with the applicant. **It was agreed that the Clerk respond with No Comment to make.**

2/22-23/8 Date of next PC Meeting, Monday 13th June 2022 at 7,30pm, Meeting Room, Brandeston Village Hall.

DRAFT