LITTLEHAMPTON HARBOUR BOARD

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LITTLEHAMPTON HARBOUR BOARD

MINUTES OF THE LITTLEHAMPTON HARBOUR BOARD MEETING HELD AT THE HARBOUR OFFICE, PIER ROAD, LITTLEHAMPTON ON 19TH DECEMBER 2011

Present:
Councillor Graham Tyler (Chairman)
Councillor George Blampied
Councillor Robin Brown
Mr Philip Bush
Councillor Roger Elkins
Mr John O'Flynn
Councillor Nigel Peters
Councillor Tony Squires
Councillor Dr James Walsh
Councillor Frank Wilkinson

In Attendance:
Ms Anne Carnegie (Harbour Manager)
Mr Chris Braby (Treasurer to the Board)
Miss Nicola Jones (Clerk to the Board)
Mrs Marchant (Notes Secretary)

225. AGENDA ITEM 1: APOLOGIES

There were apologies from Mr Robert Boyce (Vice Chairman).

226. AGENDA ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wilkinson declared a personal interest as Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities, Environment and Enterprise, West Sussex Countye Council in Item 5, Harbour Operational Report regarding the Waste Plan.

227. ITEM 3: PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were 5 members of the public present.

A representative for Mr D Clarke and Mr S Hunter asked on their behalf whether LHB intended to repeat the exercise of removal of fishermen from the jetty sited at Osborne Moorings on Health and Safety grounds.

Cllr Tyler replied that LHB was only responsible for its own moorings.

Mr Chapman queried dredging in the river. The Harbour Manager replied LHB had responded to the changing needs of river users and that expenditure on maintenance of the river had been adjusted accordingly. There had not been any significant dredging since around 2004. The Harbour Manager explained that other private owners dredged their mooring areas. LHB was responsible for its own moorings, the harbour mouth and bar. Mr Chapman asked who he should approach to dredge his mooring and what the cost would be. The Harbour Manager replied this would require a Section 43 application to the Board and it was suggested he visit the Harbour Manager's office to discuss in detail.

Mr Warren expressed his concern that the river was reported at 0.86M above chart datum and that yachts with a deep keel would not be able to access the harbour. He asked when LHB would take action on this. The Harbour Manager replied that Mr Warren could view the results of the recent commercial survey at the Harbour Office which showed this measurement in certain areas around the East Beacon. The Harbour Manager added that the bar varied and changed frequently but felt there was not a significant change. Mr Warren believed the figure used to hold constant at 0.7M above chart datum. The Harbour Manager stated that the situation would continue to be monitored by in-house and commercial survey.

Mr Daniel Parker read a letter to the Board concerning the proposed 5% increase in Harbour Dues and his objection to it. He stated that he had provided the Board with his accounts. He believed a 2% increase should suffice. He referred to Arun Yacht Club's (AYC's) excavation of moorings which he believed had affected other river users as had sea defences.

Cllr Tyler replied the proposed 5% increase in dues would be discussed later in the meeting.

Ms Celia Thomson handed in a letter containing written questions which she requested be answered at the next Board Meeting. She then left the meeting.

Cllr Elkins thought two points required further clarification - the impact of work at AYC on users of the harbour and notification to stakeholders regarding impending flood defence works to the East Bank. Cllr Tyler responded that the remaining content of Mr Parker's letter would be addressed separately and a copy of Mr Parker's letter was handed to those present.

Cllr Dr Walsh felt the question should be addressed immediately concerning notification of the sea defence works. Mr O'Flynn replied that he would provide a copy of the works programme to the Harbour Office. Mr Parker was concerned at losing divers, customers etc. Cllr Tyler asked if the EA had approved the works and Mr O'Flynn confirmed the date for approval was February 2012.

The Harbour Manager reported there had been some levelling earlier this year but she was unable to commit to any further levelling at this stage. The Harbour Manager stated that levelling on LHB's moorings took place after that of AYC's and if displacement of silt had occurred this should have been removed. The Harbour Manager would ensure Charter skippers had access to view the EA Programme from Mr O'Flynn. Mr O'Flynn explained that work on the flood defences would depend upon how much money was allocated to the programme by central government. The Harbour Manager referred to the planned information board designed to promote commercial operators in the harbour and said she would prefer to wait for the decision from the EA in February before progressing the matter further rather than risk having to remove/redesign the board at a later date. Cllr Dr Walsh felt the board did not have to be of complicated design or structure.

Cllr Squires referred to the member of public who had raised the issue of silt. Cllr Squires believed LHB should be investigating this from a Health and Safety viewpoint. The Harbour Manager repeated a commercial survey had been carried out and had revealed there was little change in the depths in the harbour and she confirmed the deposition of silt was not affecting the navigational safety of commercial shipping.

Cllr Elkins arrived at 10.03am. Cllr Brown joined the meeting at 10.08am.

228. AGENDA ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 31st October 2011 were agreed and accepted by all.

The Board

Resolved unanimously

That the Minutes of the Board meeting held on 31st October 2011 be approved as a correct record.

229. AGENDA ITEM 5: OPERATIONAL REPORT

Trade:

3 commercial ships had visited in October, 0 in November and 1 to date in December.

Leisure:

The Harbour Manager reported that over-night leisure visitors had been poor in May. It had not been a good year for leisure particularly in the early months of 2011.

Repairs to East Training Wall:

Work was expected to commence to the east training wall on 9 January over a 3 week period. Works would take place on the beach and no disruption was anticipated. Arun District Council Engineers and Foreshore Departments were aware of the proposed works.

Ferry:

The ferry was due to commence operating in the spring of 2012. The vessel had been inspected and a report submitted of items to be addressed. Re-inspection would take place in February.

Harbour Dues:

Harbour dues were continuing to be recovered via solicitors.

Events Plan:

The events plan for 2012 had been circulated to local businesses etc. In 2012 there would be a Harbour Festival Weekend on 23 and 24 June.

Work Placement:

In January 2012 a work placement student from Chichester University would begin analysing data to establish the home ports of visitors and would work on a strategy with the Harbour Manager aimed at increasing visitor numbers. Cllr Blampied welcomed the student work placement and the proposed analysis that would be carried out. Cllr Peters stated he would be keen to know why visitors did not return to the harbour and asked if any analysis could be done on this. Cllr Squires felt marketing experts should be called in. Cllr Dr Walsh was pleased income was under review.

Marine Conservation Zones:

The Harbour Manager reported on Marine Conservation Zones. The nearest to Littlehampton being Kingmere Rocks. Formal public consultation would take place in 2012.

Lower Tidal River Arun Strategy (LTRAS):

The EA's Lower Tidal River Arun Strategy will define how best to manage flood and erosion risk over the next 100 years. Consultation on the options identified for the different parts of the Strategy area would begin in Spring 2012.

West Sussex Waste Plan:

The West Sussex County Council Waste Plan will not be progressed at this time and a revised timetable is awaited.

National Policy Statement for Ports:

The Harbour Manager reported on the National Policy Statement for Ports issued by the Department for Transport in October 2011. The statement emphasised thatport development must respond to changing commercial demands and be market led.

Cllr Dr Walsh believed Littlehampton Harbour would not qualify as the kind of port to take a high number of large ships.

Marine Safety Audit:

The Harbour Manager also reminded the Board that the 3 year Port Marine Safety Code Safety Audit was due to be completed by end March 2012.

Kevin Stewart:

The Harbour Manager advised the Board of a recommendation received from the Marine Adviser, that Kevin Stewart be officially authorised as a pilot for Littlehampton Harbour.

The Board

Resolved

1. **To note the Operational report.**
2. **In accordance with s3 of the Pilotage Act 1987, to authorise Mr Kevin Stewart as a pilot at Littlehampton Harbour**

Cllr Dr Walsh asked that the Board's congratulations be passed on to Mr Stewart.

230. AGENDA ITEM 6 - Health & Safety Report

The Harbour Manager reported 3 remaining uprights at the former UMA Wharf were still to be removed subject to favourable weather conditions. The remaining pontoon would also be removed.

"Steep drop" notices had been erected south of the West Beach car park.

Cllr Blampied noted reference to the installation of an echo sounder on Windsong. The Harbour Manager confirmed this had been included in the budget.

Cllr Peters referred to the investigation into "Flashpark" car parking. The Harbour Manager replied this was regarding correct use of the car park and the opportunity to impose fines. This would be discussed further as part of Item 10.

The Board

Resolved unanimously

To note the Harbour Manager's Health & Safety Report.

231. AGENDA ITEM 7: The outcome for 2011/12, the 2012/13 budget and Schedule of Charges

The Treasurer began by addressing the expected outcome for 2011/12. He reminded the Board that at the October Board Meeting he had alerted them to a possible overspend of £40,000. This he said was still the case. This over run would be funded by surrendering earmarked reserves and the sacrifice of several “rainy day accruals”. No request for further funding from the two local authorities would be made to cover this over run. The Treasurer did however emphasis that, with the exception of the minimum statutory reserve, this left the Board with little or no reserves to fund any future unplanned expense.

Turning to the 2012/13 budget the Treasurer advised that the plan called for a significant precept increase of £43k which was driven primarily by once off extraordinary costs. It was worth noting, the Treasurer said, that the 2011/12 Precept was lower than 2010/11 by £14,000 based primarily on the prospect of increased rental income from the former UMA Wharf which failed to materialise. This failure to achieve budgeted rental income the Treasurer said had contributed to both the 2011/12 and 2012/13 deficits. The Treasurer then highlighted the principle drivers that contributed to the precept increase, they were:

Aligning of Harbour Dues with the Board’s Financial Year, Harbour Revision Order, Engineering Assessment of the Harbour’s Infrastructure not related to the East Bank Flood Defence Scheme and various feasibility studies

Given the need to fund these once off costs, the capital budget had been removed completely for 2012/13. It was originally hoped that an investment in a second hand patrol rib could be made at a cost of £8,000. Patrolling was currently undertaken by the workboat which was not a suitable vessel for this task. Should the financial circumstances of the Board improve the Treasurer said, this proposal would be resurrected.

The Treasurer advised the Board that due to the extent of the precept increase both he and the Harbour Manager had felt it prudent to brief the Local Authorities beforehand.

Turning to the charges for 2012/13 the Treasurer to the Board reminded members that, given the timing of budget preparation, the Board has historically used the inflation rates as published in October each year to set the increases. This is where this year’s inflation increase of 5% had been derived. The downside to this approach was that in any given year the Board would either gain or lose depending on the outcome of actual inflation between the 1st of April in one year and the 31st of March of the next. The Treasurer explained that in each of the years 10/11 and 11/12, actual inflation had run well ahead of the budgeted percentage increase in the dues. In fact over these two years Board had under recovered by a total of 2.3%. The Treasurer reminded the Board that historically the budgeted inflation rate had been based on RPI but in recent times the lower CPI rate had been used. The Treasurer to the Board had received some criticism from the Local Authorities for not applying the higher RPI but it was generally felt that CPI was the more equitable of the two.

Cllr Squires enquired whether the remaining space at the former UMA Wharf could be used for boat storage. The Treasurer to the Board said that the budget contained a provision for a feasibility study on the former UMA Wharf. Cllr Squires asked whether the Harbour Revision Order would amalgamate the various Acts under which

the LHB operated. The Clerk to the Board stated that intention of the HRO was to bring update Harbour bye-laws.

Cllr Dr Walsh believed the 5% increase would not be welcome and enquired how the revised Harbour Dues charges compared with Chichester and Shoreham ports. The Treasurer to the Board stated that whilst there was no desire to make Littlehampton uncompetitive, comparison with neighbouring ports such as Chichester which was significantly better funded was difficult.

The Harbour Manager stated that other ports prices and facilities were kept under review to ensure Littlehampton did not lose any part of the market. Cllr Dr Walsh suggested that perhaps the increase in dues should discriminate in favour of those who made a living from the river. Mr Bush, as the representative for leisure users voiced strong opposition to this and stated the increase should be across all users as proposed.

Cllr Squires enquired whether the EU could be contacted for funding. Cllr Elkins thanked the Treasurer for his report. Cllr Elkins was most concerned that there was no contingency or reserves in place. Cllr Tyler asked the Treasurer to confirm that LHB had a statutory requirement to maintain a minimum reserve of £35,000. The Treasurer confirmed this was the case and that the budget assured that this was reserve remained intact.

Cllr Wilkinson voiced concern about what may happen in 2013/14. The Treasurer to the Board stated this was why all avenues and possibilities for enhancing the Board's income were being visited in next year's budget.

Cllr Dr Walsh stated the Local Authorities were obliged to meet any extra precept requests in the event of a genuine emergency.

Cllr Squires was worried there was no capital in the budget. He added that in any case any in the event of unexpected spend being required it would have to be met by ADC and WSCC. The Treasurer to the Board confirmed that this was the case and cited the example of the local authorities meeting the costs of the repairs to the West Pier.

Cllr Elkins believed that the management by the Treasurer and the Harbour Manager was leading LHB in the right direction.

The recommendations were then taken en bloc:

In a motion proposed by Mr Bush and seconded by Cllr Peters,

The Board

Unanimously resolved

1. **to note the revised forecast for 2011/12 and authorise the Treasurer to vire funds between 2011/12 budget income and expense headings as appropriate**

2. **to approve the 2012/13 Budget**

3. **to approve the setting of the 2012/13 Precept at £218,858 to be shared equally between ADC and WSCC**

4. **to approve the 2012/13 Schedule of Charges as presented**

The Treasurer thanked the Board for its support and the Board thanked the Treasurer for his hard work.

232. AGENDA ITEM 8: Meeting Timetable for 2012/13

The Clerk to the Board presented a Meeting and Agenda Preparation Timetable for the forthcoming year.

The Board

Resolved

To note the Meeting Timetable for 2012/13

233. AGENDA ITEM 9: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

In a motion proposed by Cllr Walsh and seconded by Cllr Squires

The Board

Resolved

That due to the confidential nature of the following item(s) to be considered, that the public and accredited representatives of the press and other media be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of business of personal information relating to an individual, the business of third parties and/or legal proceedings.

234. AGENDA ITEM 10: Workshop and Harbour Offices – review of premises

The Harbour Manager introduced her report as an opportunity for the Board to review the future of the harbour office and workshop. The Board discussed the current and potential future use of its various premises.

The Board

Resolved unanimously

1. **To note the report and,**

2. **To approve further work to investigate the options for more intensive use of the Workshop and Harbour Office as identified in the 2012/13 budget.**

Cllr Tyler wished everyone Merry Christmas.

There being no further business the Meeting finished at 11.37am