

**SALHOUSE PARISH COUNCIL** minutes of Extraordinary meeting held on August 5th 2013 in Jubilee Hall, Lower Street, at 7.30pm.

Present: Councillor C.Dady (Chairman)  
Councillor C.McCormick (Vice Chairman)  
Councillor N. Taylor  
Councillor S. Heard  
Councillor N.Ball  
Councillor Mrs. L. Fielder  
Councillor Mrs S. Blow

Officer: Daphne Wyatt – Clerk

Visitors in Attendance: None  
Residents Numbered Thirty five

2013

**404 APOLOGIES RESIGNATIONS CO-OPTIONS AND ELECTIONS.**

**404.1** To consider apologies for absence.

**None**

**404.2** Co-options

**None**

**404.3** Resignations

There has been one resignation. Cllr. R. Rayson – to be dealt with at next full Council meeting

**405 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

All declared an interest as members of the Parish.

**406 COUNCILS AGREEMENT TO EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC AT END OF FORMAL MEETING.**

All members agreed.

**407 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

“Thank you for attending tonight to give your views to us on the proposal for the PC to purchase a village property - the ex- sorting office on Lower Street / Chapel Loke corner - with a view to opening that premises as a shop.

We have had a lot of feedback from those who are not attending this evening, and that feedback plus yours will help us in reaching a decision.

As you will be aware, since the closure of the current shop and PO was announced together with the proposed relocation of the PO to the Bell, there was much comment made and for whatever reason that proposal is no longer on the table. At this time the PC did look to see if alternatives were available such as the ex- hairdressers adjoining the pub car park (cost and availability were considered a major issue), the Jubilee Hall (who felt it would be difficult to incorporate successfully) and the possibility of a shop at the broad car park, the latter proposal getting a fairly negative response due to its location at one end of the village.

When we held the neighbourhood plan meeting comments made suggested that the village wished to retain a shop and PO, and we were recently approached regarding the ex- sorting office. What we have done so far is to test the availability of that premises at a price not above its open market value. So it does appear that property would be available to the PC at a price that could be recovered in the future should a new enterprise fail. In addition there are many potential grants available including

BDC, NCC, Broads Authority, Plunkett Foundation, Post Office, Princes Trust and so on, including some major EU funding but not until January. Tesco apparently can also help with shopfitting!

You may ask why not continue with the existing shop? The answer is that this does not appear to be an option, certainly not at an affordable price. It would also need substantial refitting as it does not comply with the current PO requirements.

A word of warning - this is just the start of the process and even if a decision was to be made for us to proceed property purchases do not always go to plan, and nor do grant applications - whatever happens, there will be plenty of hard work ahead.

If we are to proceed timing is important. The shop and PO have continued to trade through a very lengthy period since the move to the Bell was announced, and we cannot be sure of how much longer the current business will trade. There is an indication however that if we move swiftly the closure will be held off until a new shop / PO is ready to open.

So that is the background, now I will focus on some of the more detailed issues.

As things stand, even without grants the PC capital funds which can only be used for purchase of assets would be sufficient to make the purchase. We would not expect therefore for this project to be at any cost to council tax payers in the village.

PO support to the relocation and the project has been tentatively offered, subject to certain minor property alterations - security for instance, and a business plan. The PO no longer offers any postmaster salary, income has to be generated from sales.

I think we could call this a 'community shop' in that via the PC purchasing the premises it becomes owned by the Salhouse community. However a Community Interest Company - a CIC - could be formed where villagers could invest in the property via sales of shares.

The PC would not become a shopkeeper - options for the business would be via a letting, and the CIC would also be able to run it directly using paid staff and volunteers. Since Saga was published, there has only been one approach from someone who would be prepared to offer a couple of voluntary hours per week. A CIC would need a much larger response than that.

Being almost where the current shop is parking arrangements would continue as at present, and there is the potential to have an access to the shop door from Lower Street albeit I expect wheelchair access would be from the corner of Chapel Loke. There may be other local issues for us to resolve, but traffic would be no worse than at present helped of course by the closure of the sorting office.

Broadland have indicated change of use may be possible, but this of course would be subject to as planning application with the consultation that accompanies that. Another BDC department, economic development, are keen to meet with us to see how they can help on the business and grant side.

Regarding the project, if we proceed the PC will develop and work to a risk matrix to ensure the project is properly undertaken, and risks managed. Professional help will be used, potentially available at low or no cost. Capacity is an issue from a small PC and if there are any volunteers to join a working group to take this forward then I would recommend to the Council we create a working group to take the project forward, and the Council will no doubt have views about our ability to run this project without that help.

Finally, this meeting.

We will open the meeting to take your views. We will listen and ask that you complete the questionnaires. To allow everyone the chance to speak, please be as brief as possible and try not to repeat what has already been said. We will ask for your name and postcode too.

The Council has decided to exclude the press and public from the discussion regarding the project itself. This is as we need to discuss some commercially sensitive information. However, we will issue minutes from the meeting so you can see what was said and decided, but will blank out this commercially sensitive information from those minutes.

I hope that has explained the background we will now move to the public forum.”

#### **408 PUBLIC FORUM.**

Standing Orders were suspended and the meeting was opened to the residents.

Many residents expressed their views, the majority of whom confirmed that they did require premises to be obtained to house a shop and post office. There were no objections.

There was the alternative view of proceeding with caution as the Council intended (at this stage) to use Charity monies.

Apart from that decision and obtaining a valuation, there had not been any other decisions made regarding this matter, before this meeting, as explained by the Chairman.

All questions that were asked, were replied to by the Chairman

A questionnaire was circulated to all and many were returned that evening. These have been passed to the Chairman for perusal. It was agreed to place the questionnaire on the Salhouse Village website for those who were unable to attend tonight's meeting.

- 409** After more general discussion, the Chairman thanked all for coming and in accordance with Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960 requested Press and Public to leave the meeting during consideration of the remaining discussion, owing to the confidential nature. 8.30pm Resumed Standing Orders.

#### **410 CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS.**

Several of the salient points raised by the residents were discussed and noted.

**Title** - Since calling the meeting a land registry search had raised some questions, and it was agreed we would seek to address these locally however would consider using a solicitor if the situation remained unresolved, rather than committing fully to any expenditure of funds, including any further consultation, prior to fully establishing the situation

**Purchase price** - it was noted that the lowest potential purchase price discussed, would fall within the figure given in the valuation we had carried out. It was noted that this would therefore provide security for funds expended on a purchase

**Interested parties** - it appears that there are some interested parties in entering into an agreement with the Council to run the shop on a tenancy basis, should a letting be the preferred option. If this route was followed the Council agreed that the preference would be to work with an existing locally based (NE Norwich / Broadland) general shop and post office business so the shop could operate during staff holidays and the shop would not require a large stock room.

It was agreed that the Councillors would meet at the Old Sorting office site at 6.15pm on August 12<sup>th</sup> to acquaint themselves with the premises.

There being no further matters, the Chairman thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

DRAFT