

SAVE THE BULL ACTION GROUP

MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON 11 MAY 2022

Present: Keith Birch (Chair)

Bob Cheshire (Treasurer)

Brian Caffarey (Secretary)

Jamie Snary

Ian Taylor

Henry Wilsher

Harry Platt (item 3 only)

ITEM 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1. KB welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Management Committee and those present introduced themselves.

ITEM 2: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies were received from Graham Newton.

ITEM 3: PLANNING IMPLICATIONS OF THE DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

3. The Committee had invited Harry Platt, who has much experience of planning and development and who has played a key role in the Moor Place Heritage Group, to discuss with them the planning implications of approving or rejecting the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

4. In a lengthy discussion the meeting considered the arguments supporting development of the Hill House site; the likelihood of its being developed even though it was only a 'reserve' site in the draft NP, leading to far more houses being built than was required; and the implications, if the draft NP was rejected, for dealing with planning applications for the Bull and other sites.

5. The Management Committee warmly thanked Harry Platt for helping them to explore the implications of the present draft NP.

ITEM 4 – REPRESENTATIONS TO PUNCH AND THE PARISH COUNCIL

6. The meeting discussed how to take forward the Group's aim of ensuring that The Bull was a thriving pub. The Committee noted, first of all, that the Information Notice, formally announcing that the referendum on the draft Neighbourhood Plan would be held on 23 June, was being issued by East Herts Council on 12 May.

7. The Committee reiterated its belief that, while the decline of the The Bull was caused by many factors, Punch's proposals would increase the risk of the pub closing since the outside areas would be less attractive as the result of an access road running through the car park

and beer garden. It seemed very unlikely, too, that, as had been claimed, the pub's operations would be unaffected during construction work. The proposals would do nothing to arrest the pub's decline since there were no plans to invest in its infrastructure.

8. The Committee noted that there had been no response so far from Punch Pubs to KB's email of 3 May in which he had reported the great concern expressed at the public meeting held on 28 April about the future of The Bull. KB had informed Punch of the setting-up of the Save The Bull Action Group and the mandate given to the Committee to fully pursue the aim of ensuring The Bull's survival as a thriving pub. In that message KB had urged Punch Pubs to reconsider their refusal to sell the pub to the community or to make any significant investment in the pub's infrastructure.

9. In discussion there was general agreement that a key factor in ensuring the pub's survival was to encourage the community to use and support it since it provided an enormously valuable community resource, bringing people together. The ideal solution, it was felt, would be for Punch to allow the community the opportunity to buy the pub at a reasonable price. In return, the Group might be willing to drop its opposition to Punch's proposals to build housing on the field, though the loss of this land would reduce the ability of the pub to develop its business. However, it was felt that The Bull could still be successful as a well-run community pub. If Punch continued to refuse to sell the pub to the community it was essential that they came up with firm commitments to make a substantial investment in the pub out of the windfall money from the sale of the land. Such investment should not be required to be repaid by the tenant.

10. It was recognised that a huge amount of work had gone into the preparation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and it would be very unfortunate if the Management Committee felt that there was no option other than to advise a 'no' vote in the referendum. It was agreed that KB would follow up his email, saying that unless substantive proposals were received by 26 May, the date of the Management Committee's next meeting, the Committee would have to give serious consideration to mounting a vigorous campaign for a 'no' vote in the referendum, with the aim of securing a new/revised Neighbourhood Plan which would remove the Bull site as a site for housing. **ACTION: KEITH BIRCH**

11. There had been claims that a 'no' vote would mean that all the time and money spent on preparing the draft NP would be wasted. But it was argued that this was not the case. The great majority of the present draft could remain exactly as it is. The only element that would need to be reconsidered, and consulted on fully, would be in respect of housing allocations. It was suggested that this process need not take longer than a year. The Group would be very happy to assist with this task.

12. It was also agreed that the Group would continue to try to work with the Parish Council to encourage them to join it in seeking a solution which would avert a contested referendum.

ITEM 5 – APPLICATION TO MAKE THE BULL AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

13. JS said that a draft application had been prepared. All that remained to be decided was the precise area to be covered by the application. JS would pursue this in consultation with other members of the Committee. **ACTION: JAMIE SNARY**

ITEM 6 – PREPARATION FOR A POSSIBLE COMMUNITY BUY-OUT

14. It was agreed that, even if a community buy-out of The Bull was not possible in the short term, it would be sensible to consider how this might be accomplished in future if the opportunity arose, not least because the time available to construct a bid would be very short (six months from the date of notification to East Herts Council of the intention to sell the pub). It was further agreed that the Management Committee should set up a sub-group to take this forward. In the first instance, though, the Management Committee would ask someone to come along to speak about the community buy-out of the pub at Stocking Pelham. **ACTION: BOB CHESHIRE**

PROGRESS IN SETTING UP THE GROUP

15. BrianC noted the following progress: nearly 80 members to date; a new application form issued; a Facebook page established (SaveTheBullMuchHadham), which will be promoted; a website about to go live; election of the Management Committee; a press release issued; and three emails sent to members. The 'to do' list included setting up banking arrangements, collecting annual subscriptions, finalising the Group's Constitution to reflect the banking arrangements and issuing a privacy notice re data protection. **ACTION: BOB CHESHIRE AND BRIAN CAFFAREY**

16. The meeting welcomed an expression of interest in filling the Membership Secretary post, which would be followed up. **ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17. The next meeting will be at 8pm on Thursday 26 May.

26 May 2022