

## SAVE THE BULL ACTION GROUP

### MINUTES OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON 26 MAY 2022

Present: Keith Birch (Chair)

Brian Caffarey (Secretary)

Sue Jackson (Membership Secretary)

Graham Newton

Jamie Snary

Ian Taylor

Henry Wilsher

Cllr Ian Hunt (Item 3 only)

Michael Sutton (Item 5 onwards)

#### ITEM 1: WELCOME TO SUE JACKSON

1. KB welcomed Sue Jackson, attending her first meeting as Membership Secretary.

#### ITEM 2: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies were received from Bob Cheshire (Treasurer).

#### ITEM 3: DISCUSSION WITH CLLR IAN HUNT

3. Cllr Hunt had offered to attend the meeting to brief the Committee on the implications of campaigning for a 'no' vote in the referendum on 23 June.
4. He began by noting the pre-planning application which Punch Pubs had just submitted to the District Council. This reverted to an earlier design, picking up the features of the almshouses. Significantly, it also included undertakings to invest in the infrastructure of the pub – the kitchen, the toilets and the internal décor – as well as providing increased car parking spaces and improvements to the beer garden. All these commitments were subject to planning approval being given for development of the site.
5. Turning to the NP referendum, Cllr Hunt warned that a 'no' campaign could lead to a good deal of friction and unpleasantness and make people reluctant to serve the local community. He argued that the consequences of a 'no' vote would be very damaging for the village, leading to a situation in which the District Council would be unable to resist development on various sites, including the Bull and Hill House, with little or no regard being paid to the village development boundary.
6. Following discussion, in which several of those present expressed scepticism about the picture painted by Cllr Hunt of a developers' 'free for all', KB thanked him for attending and sharing his assessment of the implications of a 'no' vote, which the Committee had noted.

#### ITEM 4 – APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11 MAY 2022

7. The draft minutes were approved.

#### ITEM 5 – DISCUSSIONS WITH PUNCH PUBS

8. Michael Sutton briefed the meeting on soundings he had taken of various parties about the possibility of a community buy-out of The Bull. However, there were no indications that Punch or Fortress (the private equity group which owned Punch) were willing to sell and, even if they were minded to do so, it seemed that, because of the way they valued their premises, the asking price would be prohibitively expensive.

9. Referring to the decision at the previous meeting to set up a sub-group to examine how a community buy-out might be organised if the opportunity arose, KB noted that the purchase of the Railway Arms in Saffron Walden seemed to provide an excellent model to follow. It was agreed that the Committee would discuss again how much preparatory work should be undertaken. BC would place this on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.

**ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY**

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

10. JS noted that it had now been agreed by Committee members in correspondence that the application should exclude the area which Punch Pubs wished to develop since it was clear that any past use of this land was incidental to the pub's business and was excluded from the tenancy agreement. Any application which included part of this land would be bound to be refused by the District Council. BC would now submit the application.

**ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY**

#### ITEM 6 – STANCE ON THE NP REFERENDUM

11. The meeting discussed the advice which it should give to members on voting in the NP referendum. It was noted that some felt that the inclusion of the Bull site in the draft NP arose only because the draft did not take proper account of the availability of the Hill House site, which, in their view, might well be developed in addition to the sites allocated in the draft. However, the Group's aim was to ensure the continued existence of the pub as a thriving business, rather than to take issue with the draft Plan's underlying housing allocation. Moreover, independent advice which the Group had received indicated that there could be no certainty that, even if the draft NP was rejected in the referendum, a planning application for the Bull site would not succeed. Given that the Group's pressure had now resulted in Punch committing to investment in the pub's infrastructure, and the division and uncertainty which would stem from a 'no' campaign – which might not succeed in its aim – it was agreed that the Management Committee would not be justified in advising its members to vote against the draft NP.

12. It was further agreed that, before making this decision public, the Management Committee would try to get Punch to firm up its commitment, in particular by confirming that none of the promised investment would be recouped from the tenant.

**ACTION: KEITH BIRCH**

#### ITEM 7 – PROMOTING THE BULL

13. It was agreed that an important strand of the Group's work should be to support efforts to make the pub a more attractive venue and to encourage the community to get behind it. IT and HW would meet to exchange ideas about possible initiatives.

**ACTION: IAN TAYLOR AND HENRY WILSHER**

#### ITEM 8 – PROGRESS IN SETTING-UP THE GROUP

14. BC said that the Group now had over 80 members. As already noted, Sue Jackson had joined the Management Committee as the Group's Membership Secretary. The Group's website ([www.savebullinnmuchhadham.co.uk](http://www.savebullinnmuchhadham.co.uk)) had gone live and several Facebook postings (<https://www.facebook.com/SaveTheBullMuchHadham>) had been issued. Bob Cheshire, before he went on holiday, had been taking action to open a bank account for the Group.

**ACTION: BOB CHESHIRE AND BRIAN CAFFAREY**

#### ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15. BC said that SJ had kindly agreed to cover his Secretarial duties as necessary during his imminent holiday.

#### ITEM 10 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16. A date for the next meeting would be arranged in the light of developments.

1 June 2022