

KINGSBRIDGE & SALCOMBE Chamber of Commerce.

Minutes for Committee Meeting

Wednesday 6th January 2016 at 5.45 pm
Quay House, Kingsbridge



Meeting Chairman: David Hanmer

Treasurer: Peter Richardson,

Secretary: Katharine Harrod E-mail: info@kingsbridge-salcombe-chamber.co.uk

1. **Attending:** Peter Richardson, Steve Mammatt, Mike Fice, Raymond Hayes, David Hanmer, Wayne Grills, Irene Jeeninga, Jackie Smith, Samantha Short, Carol Horton, Rufus Gilbert, Nick Walker, Gemma Edmonds, Rob Wheeler
Apologies: James Spencer, Deb Ward
2. **Agree Minutes of last Committee** - December 2015 agreed without alteration.
3. **Matters Arising December 2015** - to be covered below.
4. **Communications, Projects & Publicity**
 - Staffing issues in the Kingsbridge/Salcombe area (Google Forms questionnaire), WG to speak with KH, update in February
 - Update: Tourism, availability of visitor statistics SS chased details following previous discussions re SHDC no longer paying for statistics. RG was asked to look into this. Nadine (SHDC) questioned the usefulness of the stats being that there is a time lag of 12months and similar details can be found for free on alternate sites - however, the free details are not specific to the South Hams.
Visit England data is up to date and has a section on Devon but can not be further drilled down.
RG offered to pay for a one-year subscription to enable us to assess the worth of the data. Both GE and SS are in agreement that the figures could be used to benefit new businesses with funding/loans re numbers of visitors to the area. JSp also previously noted as being interested in the data from a commercial viewpoint. RG asked if DCC had been contacted regarding the data they collect? NW queries that the information collated is in any way representative and feels that it could be seriously misleading.
Following discussion, it was agreed that this would not be taken further at this time as no definitive answer could be established as to the validity of the data sought.
No Further Action

5. Treasurers Report

Current cash position

Bank: current account: -	£9,018.38
Includes: -	
(Jack Tanner Award	£937.34)
(KCC	£1,508.74)
Net: -	£6,572.30
Plus: Deposit account:	£3,156.58
TOTAL: -	£9,728.88

Direct Debit

PR: Our bank would require us to have a turnover of £2m and 250 customers (members) to collect subs by d/d.

I have discovered that there are intermediate organisations which can operate a d/d system on our behalf. The cheapest I have found charge 1% with no other charges. The advantage of this would be that everyone would have to sign a direct debit and thereafter we are in control. PR proposes that during 2016 we advise our Members of an increase in subscription fees in 2017 via a direct debit system.

Each year we have more organisations asking for our support and while we continue our drive for new members we have not increased these numbers significantly.

The committee agreed a £10 rise in subscription fees for the year 2017.

ACTION: DD forms to be organised and the subscription rise to be effective from 01/01/2017

6. Secretary Report:

The Mahabharat Business Club is organised; we have the following speakers:

- Adam Parnell Salcombe Harbour Master,
- Martyn Canevali PCT,
- Michael Dennis - Living Wage,
- Sha Hard - Youth & Business Awards

SM asked that we also allow some time for details about Crab Fest to be given. It is anticipated that John Cooke will speak on their behalf.

ACTION: KH/SM to contact John Cooke

Noted that work has commenced on a media pack for KIB, KH will contact local marketing experts for further input and quotes.

7. Kingsbridge Issues

- The continued neglect of the Kings Arms - (see attached letter from local MP) RG states there's not a great deal to add other than a pre planning application enquiry has been submitted but could not be agreed upon as the developers wanted a commercial element on the ground floor and accommodation above. RG has checked with the planners and no updates have been received. No news has been received since the letter dated 15th December 2015 from our local MP. RH added that the KSCC has written a letter to Motcomb Estates. Noted that the South Hams Society has been in touch with the KSCC via KH and is expected to be more vocal about the situation in the future.

ACTION: KH to circulate letters written on behalf of the Committee.

RH also questioned what is likely to happen to the NatWest Premises and stated that we should also be writing to NatWest to determine their intentions with the building.

ACTION: KH to compose letter

- Kingsbridge Celebrates Christmas - discussion, do we retain this within the KSCC? SS - it is not clear to traders who has organised the event KIC, KSCC etc. SS proposes a separate bank

account which also helps with any future changes to the organisation of the event. SS suggests that the KSCC would be better involved by providing an element of sponsorship.

RG commends SS for taking on the event, SS thanked RG and stated that she is willing to arrange the 2016 event. Every other event is run by a separate committee and is supported by the KSCC. Agreed that the event will be managed as a separate entity managed by SS and the KIC.

- Kingsbridge Traders Facebook (SS) - Still going well, the site is now being used by some traders on a regular basis, as a group of shops there was enthusiasm to do more, SS is happy to meet with the group again, KH confirmed that she would be willing to be involved with this too. SS then mentioned the Salcombe Traders Facebook - see below.
- Update: Kingsbridge & District Light Railway - SM. There are still some details that require signing off, however, the planning was unanimously passed and we will see a train on the quay during 2016.

8. Salcombe issues

- Neighbourhood Development Plan (JSp) - Meeting 5th January, about to embark on the business survey and housing needs survey, to be followed up in March with a questionnaire to the whole town.
- Fore Street Closure - It looks inevitable that Fore Street will be closed over the February half term, SWW has an agreement to keep the road closed until 26th February. They did want to extend the road closure into March to change the water main but this has been rejected in favour of a more suitable alternative.
- Update - RW re request for monies from Caroline Bricknell (floral upgrading of fountain area). RW has spoken to CB and she will be providing a breakdown of costs for the improvement of the Fairweather Fountain. MF has also spoken with CB regarding a Salcombe in Bloom type group and she is hoping that this may lead to the creation of a group.
ACTION: Item to remain on agenda for February
- Salcombe Traders Facebook - JSp advised: Lucy Valentine, who works for The Bake House, showed an interest in being part of a trader's page for Salcombe. We met early in December and agreed to set one up, with an eye to mirroring the successful page in Kingsbridge. Lucy felt that 'Salcombe Traders' limited the page so after some to and fro we settled on 'Salcombe at Work', to launch with photos of traders shops etc. and a 'brief' focused on traders. To anchor it with the Chamber, the Chambers website was listed. I am Admin, Lucy is Editor; we are looking for more editors and hope Liz at the Vic might come aboard. I think it has around 110 Likes. Lucy is hoping to attract visitors to Salcombe to the page. I'm hoping it can be a channel for the Chamber to reach Salcombe members and prospects with relevant and valuable info e.g. on the current Fore St closure by SWW. SS has invited Lucy and JSp to the Kingsbridge Traders page to encourage them to initiate a group specifically for traders.

9. Communication/news to/from

- Kingsbridge Town Council - KTC are looking for a rise in council tax of 15% which equates to approximately 0.14-0.15 pence per week. Part of the additional monies will be used for a variety of projects including replacing hardware and security cameras as well as new ventures such as outdoor table tennis tables. RG advised that DCC is increasing by 2% and a further 2% which will be ring-fenced into social care.
- Salcombe Town Council - MF, a floodgate is being installed at Clifton Place (by Colmans Butchers), this is being done at the same time as the SWW works. The Tides Reach Plans have now been publicised on the SHDC site and will be viewed by STC in the near future. RW added that STC have a new website due to be launched by the end of the month
www.salcombetowncouncil.gov.uk

- Kingsbridge Information Centre - The new guide is out (and looks good). The main news today is, as we've all heard, about Dartmouth Information Centre closing down.
- Salcombe Information Centre - RW, explained that the SIC have been exceptionally busy and will be doing their best to attend in the future.

ACTION: Email update from the SIC team to be requested

10.AOB

How's Business?

IJ - Kingsbridge in the lead up to Christmas appeared to have lower footfall due to the weather. SS noted that Dartmouth Bid have footfall cameras and were able to report that footfall was down by 1.5%

JSm - South Hams Directory coming out again next week, since the website has been revamped there has been more interest

CH - Fair week tender has been awarded to David R for five years, noted that the Town Square was included in the tender. There are a number of issues with the contract, the Fair Week Committee are meeting next week to discuss.

SM - Salcombe Crabfest, progressing nicely, Mary Berry will be in attendance, they are looking for support in the Park & Ride area and hope to obtain sponsorship to cover this. Date of the event is 1st May.

Business up to Christmas was not as positive as it could have been - perhaps a knock on effect from Black Friday, however, the start of the year has been good.

GE - This is the first January that Buckland have stayed open - bookings are positive.

RH - the fourth quarter was poor with conveyancing down however, the year started well with a large commission, staffing is still an issue.

WG - takings up on previous years and the Pizza Planet is fully staffed.

RW - spoke with the off license over the Christmas period and they stated that the town was very busy.

SS - in terms of the guide the revenue is slightly up on last year.

DH - Toad Hall, on a per property basis for 2015 they were up by 12%

Meeting ends 19.00hrs.

Date of next Committee meetings: 3rd February, 2nd March, 13th April, Thursday 5th May, 1st June, 6th July, 7th September, 5th October, 2nd November, 7th December, venue Quay House, Kingsbridge 17.45hrs.

Letter from Local MP re Kings Arms Hotel:

Dr. Sarah Wollaston M.P.

Member of Parliament for Totnes



House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Rosemary Dunstan
TQ7 1DD

SW/ns

15th December 2015

Letter by email: trailertrashrose@hotmail.com

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Dear Rosemary,

I have received a response from Motcomb Estates and sadly there is not a definitive response to my enquiries.

Unfortunately their representatives quote reasons for their decisions. It would seem they are open to suggestions, but that of course depends on a purchaser agreeing to take on the property.

I am sorry it is not as straightforward as it initially seemed, but now we have the direct contact for this property, I will also pass this response to the Councillor Rufus Gilbert.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Wollaston".

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP



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Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

15th December 2015

Dear Dr Wollaston

Re Kings Arms Hotel, Kingsbridge

Thank you for your letter dated 23rd November 2015 regarding the Kings Arms Hotel in Kingsbridge, addressed to our Clients David & Simon Reuben. This forms part of the Wellington Pub Company portfolio, which Motcomb Estates Ltd are involved with. Our Clients are currently out of the country and have asked me to respond on their behalf.

Please be assured that it is not in our interest to have a closed property residing within the portfolio. The current state of affairs are though down to a mix of past tenants being unable to continue in business, the state of the local economy and the competition within the area. I have expanded on this below, as given the depth of local feeling, we feel it only reasonable to go into detail to ensure that you are familiar with all facts and able to weigh up matters objectively. We did note your comment on the guttering and this repair has been instructed, with completion due this week.

In terms of recent history, the last substantive lease at the Kings Arms was forfeited in 2013 due to rent arrears and bankruptcy of Tenant's guarantors. The property was immediately put on the market for re-letting via local agents and the pub was reopened on a short term agreement (at a significant rental discount to a full lease) to an operator who ran the rooms as well as the pub element. The initial short term rent had to be further reduced due to trading difficulties and heavy overheads but this was to no avail. The tenant gave Wellington notice to quit, and the property has been closed since mid-July' 14.

The issue with the two last business failures and the reason why potential Tenants have not taken their interest further is largely due to viability. The property needs considerable investment in order to address repairs to the building fabric but also from a tenant into fixtures and fittings to provide a tradeable Hotel. This is somewhere in the region of £200,000 to £250,000 for a low to medium quality establishment. The costs are potentially on the low side, as the matter would be subject to compliance with Historic England.

This financial aspect is though only one part of the issue. The other is trading viability of a 15 bedroom, listed coaching inn in the centre of Kingsbridge. There are insufficient letting rooms to spread the core management costs across, and the overall level of demand is not there to achieve a necessary occupancy level at a tariff that will generate a fair return.

As you know, Kingsbridge competes directly with Salcombe, Hope Cove and other stunning South Hams locations; anyone coming to stay in the area will tend to gravitate to somewhere that suits their budget. Trying to compete on a boutique style hotel format to increase room rates would not have the desired effect due to the location of the hotel within Kingsbridge. Holiday makers with the ability to stay in a boutique type venue won't necessarily want to be in a town centre when the coast is so close. Having a budget room operation is no guarantee that the



turnover will be sufficient to ensure profitability on an annualised basis when taking seasonality into account. The ultimate demise of the last substantive lease was due to the fact that the operator experienced a marked disconnect between demand for rooms, achievable occupancy levels and room rates; the resultant effect being the level of turnover and profit becoming unsustainable.

This is reflected in the open market. Our letting agents, Bettesworths, have extensively marketed the opportunity since 2013 with very little serious interest. The details have been widely circulated in the trade property press and the Agents' website. More specifically the website has had in the order of 1,200 direct visits to the property page and the sales particulars downloaded by over 300 parties.

In the absence of any credible letting option, we have also looked at alternative uses for the property and architects were commissioned to draw up schemes. We commenced discussions with the local planning authority for a fully residential scheme. This to us appeared the best option given the style of property and its location. The concept was though rejected by the local planners who wanted mixed use, whereby the upper floors would be converted into residential and the ground floor element retained as a commercial space, most likely a "lock up" pub.

The issue with retaining commercial space on the ground floor is twofold; there are plenty of other licensed establishments in the town and secondly the subject space let as a "lock up" unit would restrict the pool of prospective tenants as the lack of living accommodation would be problematic. We also consider that the location towards the "top end" of town will limit appeal and therefore its chance of being a success, meaning that there is potential for any operation there to become the default pub of last resort with a revolving door of temporary tenants and periods of vacancy.

In addition to the planning use, matters were also complicated by the approach towards the buildings Grade II listed status. Whilst we agree any alterations or changes to the property need to be handled sensitively, there is also a need for an element of compromise if the building is to be given a new lease of life.

As such, although the Planning Authority appeared keen to be involved in a possible process to convert the property, it was clear from correspondence in April 2015 that it was likely to take a lengthy period of time to secure a change, with caveats that would render any scheme unviable from the outset. Some of the guidance set out included the following items, all of which had a negative impact:-

- the property needed to be marketed for 12-18nr months with an independent viability report
- there was no certainty provided that the loss of the hotel rooms would be supportable in planning terms
- numerous reports were required at the outset (e.g. heritage asset appraisal, fabric audit report, historic mapping reports etc) that would be costly to produce for a scheme that was always, due to its constraints, be marginal in commercial terms
- it was requested that a local heritage architect be employed
- it was envisaged by the local authority that it would take 18nr months of work before a planning and listed building application could be ready to lodge. This is longer time frame than taken on some of the major Grade I listed properties in London that my Clients have recently undertaken.



As a commercial business we repeat it is not in our interests to have a property empty and costing money. We are always open to viable suggestions and would be happy to discuss a hotel further but we have offered it extensively in the market and a viable option has not been found. If you are aware of interested operators then we would be happy to discuss. Likewise we are happy to look again at alternative use with the local authority as long as the commercial limitations of the property are understood by all sides from the outset.

We appreciate that the above may well raise more questions in which case we would be happy to field them as appropriate.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Thornton
Head of Asset Management

