

Foulden Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting

To: Members of Foulden Parish Council

You are duly summoned to attend the next meeting of Foulden Parish Council to be held at 7.00pm on Monday 30th March 2020 at Foulden Village Hall

Cllr West

Cllr Christian

Date: Monday 23rd March 2020

Public Attendance

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend. At item 5, the public will be invited to give their views/question the Parish Council on issues on the agenda.

In the interest of public safety and the outbreak of Covid-19, this meeting was not held in public. However, responses were received from councillors in order to action any decisions which may arise.

1. Chair's opening remarks

N/A

2. To receive apologies and approve absences

N/A

3. To receive declarations of interest from members in the item to be discussed.

Cllr Parker – registered interest as pub owner in another village.

4. To receive reports from

a) Parish Clerk

A planning application 3PL/2020/0225/F was received on the 10th March 2020 with a proposal of changing the use of the White Hart Pub, from a public house to a residential dwelling.

I requested an extension for this to be discussed at the next meeting, but it was denied as it would extend the planning committees deadline. However, the case worker was happy was for an extension to go beyond the 31st March.

White Hart pub was discussed at the last meeting in regard to being a community asset and due to no known interest this was not taken any further.

A tweet went and to my knowledge there were only six responses. There was no clear response to be taken from these. Whilst it was obvious that the pub would be missed there was some speculation over whether it could be a community asset, used as a shop or if being a residential property would be best as it would be maintained.

In one tweet questions were raised regarding the conclusion in the supporting planning statement where it says 'extensive efforts were made by the owners to find a buyer.....' This information has also been queried by the case officer after receiving responses on the planning portal.

As far as the council is concerned no known offers were made by the owners to them. However, it has come to light that one councillor was approached at a personal level last year by a parishioner and they looked around the property with the owner in 2019. However, they had no interest to purchase the property as they could not see how they would make a success of it.

Looking at the conclusion as a whole, I fail to see what evidence this is based on. It states 'provides much-needed new accommodation in a sustainable location' There are currently 7 properties on the market with one being on there for more than 12months. Approximately there are six properties a year sold in Foulden, bearing in mind there are currently 2 new dwellings being created and permission has been given for a new development with 21 dwellings. As for sustainable – the village does

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not have a shop, no bus and poor roads. Powercuts, burst pipes/loss of water and blocked drains are also known to many residents.

Another statement is 'lack of viability of the former business' whilst there is no doubt it has suffered over the years, I was led to believe by the last landlady that business had increased and was promising in her time there and on several occasions I walked in to a full pub.

No one else has come forward to say that the pub was offered to them.

b) Councillors

Cllr West - Approval would result in the loss of a valuable village amenity and potential employment opportunities at a time when the village is about to expand.

No justification for the need for additional residential housing stock in the village. 7 properties of various size and price currently on the market, some for more than a year, doesn't support applicant's statement

Currently being marketed as having business potential for owner occupier, something the pub has not had the benefit of for several years.

Examples of very successful establishments in surrounding small villages; Oxborough, Hilborough, Barton Bendish, Great Cressingham, Northwold

Having been marketed for only 6 months doesn't support applicant's statement. Northwold Crown was on the market for 5 years before a buyer was found and is now a successful establishment.

No record of PC having been contacted by the Leaseholder or Freeholder with a view to community ownership.

Business and property poorly managed and maintained by failing leaseholder with a series of short-term temporary licensees over recent years, prevented from establishing a sustainable business.

Some interest from residents to operate as a community business warrants further investigation.

Cllr Winterbone - This is my opinion: In my time on the parish council the owners, nor anyone associated with The White Hart, have made any enquiry to the parish council with regards to the future, nor viability of the pub. I do not believe there is the support within the village to take it over as a community pub. However, I would like to see it re-open as a pub, and I do not believe the current owners have marketed it for a sufficient length of time with that aim

Cllr Christian - My opinion is that if 4 different tenants cannot make the White Hart viable in 4 years, I cannot see this would change under a new landlord. There is not enough interest from residents to form a cooperative, nor finance this venture. Apart from the purchase price, a great deal of money needs to be spent on this building which has been sadly neglected for a time. The number of residents objecting to the change of use is few compared to the population or households in the village. As a councillor representing the villagers, I do not think the majority of our residents have enough of a view to object to the change of use and only a few, by comparison, that do.

Cllr R Pye - On a personal view, although I would like to see our pub reopening I do not think this is viable. There are not enough people in Foulden that are in a position to support or finance a Co operative venture. As for the unfounded accusation that the PC have been party to any under handed activity with regards to this is totally unacceptable and a public statement should be issued to our residents.

Cllr Cooper - Had good times at the pub in the past but am sorry to say that is what the pub is in the past Don't think there is interest in the pub anymore It is a building in disrepair.

Cllr S Pye - I don't at the moment see too many villagers coming forward with any interest. If something could be done great, but I don't know where we go with this.

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5. Public Participation

See clerk report

6. White Hart Pub – to discuss and decide on any action to be taken

The council has concern that the owner has not put enough effort in to finding a suitable buyer for the property to continue it as a business. There are also several statements in the conclusion which would benefit from further explanation and some evidence.

Whilst there is no clear objection against the proposal and the loss of the pub would be felt by the community, it would like the planning community to consider the necessity of approving the proposal at this time.