

# CODDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Agenda Paper



Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017

### Report to Council

Item 3 To **RECEIVE** an update from the Dukes Head Support Group.

#### Background

The pub closed in **October 2014** and following a period of 'marketing' which produced neither a sale or a lease, the owners, **Clerks Wells Development Ltd.**, submitted a **planning application** to develop the land to the rear of the pub, which was subsequently **refused** and again on appeal. In **June of 2015**, following support from several villagers, an **Asset of Community Value (ACV)** was submitted to and agreed by Mid Suffolk DC. The supporters circulated a **questionnaire** to houses in Coddenham and the outskirts of Hemingstone, Gosbeck and Crowfield to establish possible support for a Community Pub. Nearly 30% of people responded, 98% of whom responded positively to this idea.

After several months of trying to gain access to view the pub to ascertain extent of works needed and hence to determine a market value, we put forward **two offers** to the owners both of which were **refused**. An individual from Debenham also made an offer which was also refused. During this period, the owners submitted a **planning application** for change of use to residential which was **refused** and again on appeal.

#### Current Situation

Some months after the Appeal hearing, having heard nothing from the owners, we made contact to enquire their position. They said they were willing to sell but at a price in the region of £300k. So nothing had changed in terms of their financial expectations and still at a price we could neither afford or considered to be a realistic valuation.

We were subsequently contacted by someone who had reopened a local pub on a commercial basis but with an element of community support. He thought that the Duke's Head could perhaps be similarly viable and he was in principle interested in investing and working with the community. We believe he has corresponded with the owners but having heard nothing from him for several months we assume he's not pursuing his idea.

A few months ago, we met with Richard Buss, one of the Directors of Clerks Wells. He seemed very keen to find a solution to enable the pub to reopen, including **possible lease options**. (This could be an option for the community run pub but would of course be very dependent upon lease terms). We have not discussed this in detail with him at all as we were hoping that an arrangement to purchase could have been made with the owner of the pub, who had been willing to negotiate with Richard Buss. Again, despite a couple of reminders, we heard nothing further until earlier this week when Richard contacted me to advise that he was meeting with MSDC to explore options which could secure the future of the Duke's Head as a pub again. These options include hiving off half the garden land for development of a couple of starter homes or homes for over 55s and leasing the remainder of the garden together with the pub to the community. During our earlier conversation with him, he had indicated that he would be willing to install a vehicular ramp from the car park to the garden for use by pub customers as well as occupiers of houses on the site.

We now await outcome of meeting with MSDC and how that may affect decision on part of the owners as to how they would wish to proceed. Any proposals would then be put to the community and the PC for consideration.

**Mrs Thomas, Dukes Head Support Group**