



WEST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Report on Public Meeting – 3rd February 2025

Venue: St Mary and St Edward's Church, West Hanningfield

Time: 7:00 PM

Facilitated by: West Hanningfield Parish Council

Purpose of the Meeting:

To provide residents with an opportunity to share their views on registering The Three Compasses Public House as an Asset of Community Value.

Attendees:

- 111 Members of the Public
- Owners of The Three Compasses Public House
- Councillors Present: Cllr Jones, Cllr Brand, Cllr Galley, Cllr Darg
- Parish Clerk: Miss L White

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Karen Jones.

Meeting Summary

Opening Remarks

Cllr Jones welcomed attendees and provided a brief introduction before inviting **Cllr Brand** to address the meeting.

Cllr Brand began by expressing appreciation for **Rose, the retiring publican**, emphasising her valued role in the community. He extended best wishes for her retirement, which was met with applause from the attendees.

He clarified that the proposal to register The Three Compasses as an Asset of Community Value was not intended to show any disrespect to the current owners. Instead, it was about safeguarding the pub's future, ensuring that if the property were ever put up for sale, the community would have the opportunity to purchase and operate it as a pub, rather than risk it being sold for development.

Explanation of Community Asset Status

Cllr Brand outlined the key aspects of registering an asset of community value:

- **Community Interest:** The asset must benefit the local community (e.g., a pub, village shop, library, park, or community hall).
- **Right to Bid:** If the owner decides to sell, the community has up to six months to prepare a bid before it can be sold on the open market. However, the owner is not obligated to sell to the community.
- **No Guarantee:** Listing the pub does not prevent it from being sold or developed, but it allows the community time to act.
- **Five-Year Protection:** Once listed, the status lasts for five years, after which a new application must be submitted if needed.
- **Council Decision:** Chelmsford City Council determines whether the asset qualifies, based on its importance to the community's social interests or well-being. The Parish Council's role is simply to submit the application if it reflects community support.

He also noted that community-owned assets often provide additional services, such as shops, cafes, or post offices, supporting local suppliers and employment.

Public Discussion

Following Cllr Brand's introduction, the floor was opened for questions and comments. A summary of key points raised is as follows:

Ownership & Operation

- **Who is the community, and who would run the pub?**
 - The community typically includes local residents, regular customers, community groups, shareholders, local businesses, and visitors.
 - A community-run pub could involve a combination of volunteers, investors, or a management team.

Case Studies & Comparisons

- **The Chequers, Roxwell** was referenced as an example of how community involvement and diverse skills contributed to a project's success.
- **The Ship Inn, West Hanningfield:**
 - The manager of The Ship explained how he revitalised the 17th-century pub, following a £300,000 refurbishment by the landlord.
 - He highlighted how investment, a good menu, and local craft beverages helped turn around a struggling business.

Concerns & Challenges

- **Is the Parish Council looking at this from a commercial perspective?**
 - The current owner described the challenges of running a pub as a viable business.

- **What if the community bid is unsuccessful?**
 - If unsuccessful, the **pub would remain on the open market.**
- **How can the community guarantee it will secure the pub?**
 - It cannot be guaranteed—the community must raise the necessary funds, and the vendor is not required to accept their offer.
- **Does the pub have to make a profit?**
 - Yes, but sustainability is the priority. Unlike a privately owned pub, which focuses on maximum profit, a community-run pub reinvests in its services.
- **Is The Compasses a listed building?**
 - Yes.

Alternative Uses & Sustainability

- **Could it serve as more than just a pub?**
 - Yes, it could incorporate other community services such as a shop, café, or meeting space.
- **Why did the project to keep the village hall open fail?**
 - The proposal for a £1.2M Public Works Loan was rejected because most residents were unwilling to see an increase in council tax.
- **What about the wider customer base?**
 - The pub is used not just by locals but also ramblers, cyclists, and passers-by, meaning its success should not be viewed solely through a financial lens.

Process & Next Steps

- **What happens after five years?**
 - The Asset of Community Value status must be renewed.
- **Has a valuation been obtained?**
 - No, as the pub is not currently on the market.

Outcome of the Meeting

At the close of the meeting, a show of hands demonstrated overwhelming support for the Parish Council to proceed with registering The Compasses as an Asset of Community Value. No attendees opposed the registration.

The Chairman confirmed that the next stage in the process is for residents to complete a questionnaire, which is appended to this report.

The meeting closed giving Rose a second round of applause.