

**Extraordinary Meeting of Glastonbury Town Council held at the Town
Hall at 7pm on Wednesday 21st January 2009**

PRESENT: The Mayor, Councillor T Billing
Councillors: A Andrews, J Barron, J Brunsdon MBE, J
Coles, S Cox, M Free, L Hull, J Keery, W Knight, E
James, P Preston, H Sharp, I Tucker,

IN ATTENDANCE: Carl Budden, Paul Calvert (SWRDA)
95 members of the public
County Councillor Alan Gloak
4 members of the Press

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Hazel Pegg and Edward Higgins spoke prior to the meeting.

The Mayor stated that he will allow the public to speak during the meeting at his discretion.

148. APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from Councillors L Browne and J White.

149. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

150. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 13th January 2009 were read by Councillors and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

**151. STATEMENT OF PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MORLAND'S ENTERPRISE PARK BY THE SWRDA**

Carl Budden introduced himself and his colleagues.

He accepted that communications in the past between SWRDA and the community, in respect of the Morland's site, had not been effective. In an effort to improve communications, SWRDA have extended an invitation to two members of the Town Council to join the Morlands Executive Group, along with District Councillor Les Bennett, Chairman of the West Mendip Community Partnership. Briefing from SWRDA will be provided regularly which he hoped would help.

The Mayor suggested that the Ward Councillor, Jim Barron and himself attend the first meeting, which was agreed.

Mr Budden confirmed that their main development partners for Morland's are Urban Splash and Priority Sites.

Priority Sites will develop light industrial and workspace.

Urban Splash will develop the Baily's buildings, red brick buildings and the Bauhaus building, along with new build, for mixed workspace for businesses and SWRDA has granted funds up to £2.75m to support the refurbishment of the Baily's Buildings under the Government's EC licensed Heritage Aid scheme.

The Chapel fields to the North of the site will be transferred to the Somerset County Council for heritage, conservation and amenity and SWRDA is willing to consider transfer of the bike shed land (Wearyall Hill) to the Town Council.

SWRDA had met with Hazel Pegg and representatives of the occupiers of the red brick buildings and the Mayor and Mr Budden thanked the group for agreeing to vacate the buildings. SWRDA has agreed to secure the buildings in a cost effective and practical way, hopefully with the assistance of the Town Council and are prepared to hold fire on the demolition of the red brick buildings for the next 3 to 6 months whilst a feasibility study is carried out by Urban Splash.

The public questions the motives of the SWRDA in their decision to demolish. Mr Budden mentioned that SWRDA has been criticised for wasting money and therefore the decision was made to demolish the red brick buildings when quotes to fence and secure the property came in at £78,000 versus a demolition cost of £68,000.

Paul Calvert said that the decision had not been made lightly and reiterated that land owners have a duty of care, and a higher duty of care to young people. Liability rests with the agency and should anyone be injured whilst in the buildings, SWRDA employees have a corporate responsibility and could be prosecuted as a result of any injury or death which occurred in the building.

The public wished to know whether the SWRDA team's targets and personal goals are published and were told these are available via the internet.

152. SWRDA RESPONSES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS OF GLASTONBURY

The Mayor explained that questions received had been placed into the following categories; finance; timescale for completing development; how SWRDA is going to deliver the development; proposed uses and forms of development; condition of existing buildings and viability of restoration; possible transfer of site to another body; consultation and communications; road infrastructure.

See attached sheet for questions within the various categories.

The following are the responses from the SWRDA.

Finance

The approved finance for the Morland's site is £22.5m of that £17.5 has been spent on site acquisition, demolition, remediation, surfaces and infrastructure, planning process, consultants' fees etc. £4.5m remains to be spent which

includes the £2.75m EU approved Heritage Grant scheme. This grant can only be spent on the Baily's buildings.

Breakdown of Costs

The public asked for a breakdown of costs to be put in the local newspaper.

Councillor Cox questioned the timescale for Urban Splash. SWRDA confirmed that they would look to alternative proposals if long stops were not reached.

How are SWRDA going to deliver the development

Mr Budden confirmed that SWRDA's role is to enable the site to be developed by others.

Carl Budden also undertook to reply to questions individually at a later date through the Town Council.

Councillor Free thanked the SWRDA for offering to work with the Town Council and asked whether SWRDA expected the Town Council to contribute financially to the security of the red brick buildings.

Paul Calvert, Property Manager, confirmed that the Town Council would not be expected to finance the security of the buildings.

Councillor Barron reported that Mendip Housing will soon be taking over the row of cottages and asked who would be financing the renovations. SWRDA confirmed that the cost of renovation would be financed by the Housing Corporation and from Mendip Housing's own reserves. SWRDA will be transferring the freehold free of charge.

The County Councillor for Glastonbury, Alan Gloak confirmed that at no time was there any suggestion that the red brick buildings were to be demolished and that he had understood that the building would be renovated to provide small workshops. He said that the building appears solid and therefore could be put back to economic use. He had concerns about Urban Splash carrying out the feasibility study.

He asked whether SWRDA would consider transferring the building to the Beckery Island Regeneration Trust who had acquired the nearby Mill House.

Mr Budden said that they still have a contract with Urban Splash.

Questions were asked regarding the contract ie. if SWRDA were able to negate the contract to be able to demolish the buildings, why could they not do the same to allow a community group to put forward a proposal.

Councillor Cox pointed out that there must have been long stops written in as part of the contract.

SWRDA confirmed they would look to alternative proposals if long stops were not reached.

A member of the public questioned whether a rural area such as Glastonbury is the right place for a business park.

Nancy Hollinrake, a local archaeologist, reported that RPS had carried out a survey on the building with a recommendation to retain. She pointed out that industry has always been part of rural life.

Councillor James doubted whether developers would be forthcoming due to the government policy of charging business rates on empty business premises.

He asked to whom SWRDA is ultimately responsible. Mr Budden confirmed that the Minister in Charge of SWRDA activities is Lord Mandelson. Councillor James suggested that the Town Council should write to the government to complain about the business rate situation.

Councillor Coles asked the Mayor whether he would allow Nick McLean, a civil and structural engineer, to speak. Mr McLean has experience in saving historic buildings as in Stroud where he saved a Mill which was about to be demolished. He offered to prepare a realistic proposal for the building to be brought back into use.

Paul Calvert reiterated that landowners have a duty of care, and a higher duty of care to young people. Liability rests with the agency and if anyone should be injured, SWRDA employees have a corporate responsibility and could be prosecuted as a result of any injury or death occurring in the buildings.

It was proposed by Councillor Tucker, seconded by Councillor Billing and **RESOLVED** that the Town Council accepts the challenge of SWRDA in assisting them in finding a local builder or alternative to help secure the red brick buildings to allow time for feasibility studies to be carried out in an effort to find a sustainable use for the buildings.

Timescale for completing development

Carl Budden confirmed that unfortunately, due to the economic downturn, Priority Sites and Urban Splash developments have stalled.

Priority Sites have detailed planning consent but there are no firm start dates nor projected completion dates.

He estimated that the development of the whole site would take another 3-5 years.

Due to a planning condition, the local company Avalon Plastics will only be permitted to relocate to the site when they have sold their previous site.

Questions were asked regarding the contract ie. As SWRDA were able to negate the contract to be able to demolish the buildings why could they not do the same to allow a community group to put forward a proposal? Members of the public were concerned that a representative from Urban Splash was not present.

Paul Branson had sat on previous consultation groups and remembered that proposals for the red brick buildings had included artist studios to be offered at low cost. He said that the buildings were perfect for studios and would promote employment.

Ramona Belcher was concerned that time is money and urged SWRDA to hand the buildings over to the community.

Andrea Preston said that the priority should be employment and that the skills base is already here in Glastonbury.

Councillor Barron was extremely concerned about the amount of money spent so far and the lack of progress. He wants to see the site developed to provide good quality jobs for local people, as soon as possible.

Bryn Whitcombe said he has a vision for the site and would inform the Council and SWRDA of that vision at a later date.

Consultation and Communications

The Mayor will ensure that there is an agenda item each month for updates which is a positive step forward.

Road Infrastructure

Councillors and the public complained about the dangerous road layout and inefficient traffic light phasing on the main road at the junction to the Morland's site.

Mr Budden confirmed that the design and infrastructure was approved by Somerset Highways and agreed that at the moment it looks rather over engineered but assured people that once the development was complete, would work well.

He suggested that any concerns should be directed to the Highways Department.

153. SUMMING UP BY SWRDA

Mr Budden said that SWRDA genuinely wish to work with the community to provide a sustainable development which will provide good quality jobs for the long term.

154. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Mayor thanked SWRDA and the public for attending and closed the meeting at 9.35pm.

Mayor, 10th February 2009