**Save our Swan**

**Minutes of Open meeting held on 28th August 2019 in Alderton Village Hall at 7 p.m**

Apologies were received from Barbara Gardiner and Judith Vaudrey

6 emails had been received from people unable to attend but who are in support of keeping the pub open.

**1**. The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and giving a short overview of the reasons the pub industry is under threat with many public houses closing throughout the country. He also expressed thanks to the present owners for their past support in the village.

**2**. It was explained that The Swan has recently been recognised as an ‘Asset of community value’ and is listed as such by East Suffolk Council. This puts a restriction on the owner disposing of the property, however the owner has 8 weeks to contest this. The Parish Council now has until 17 September 2019 to express in writing a non-binding interest in purchasing the property which then extends to 16 February 2020 to actually make a bid.

**3**. There are now 3 options open to the Parish Council – (i) do nothing which means the pub can be sold on the open market; (ii) find investors; (iii) set up an entity to try to buy the pub as a community. This can be approached in various ways – as a community co-operative, a community interest company, an enterprise investment scheme or apply for a loan from the District Council (this would mean the DC has control)

**4**. A proposal that the Parish Council should form an entity to prepare for a bid and raise funds was put to the meeting. There were approximately 75 people present and none were against, 8 unsure and the remainder for the proposal.

**5**. It was agreed that in the event of a bid being unsuccessful any funds raised by village events would be retained and used for the benefit of the village in other ways. Any individual investments or donations would be returned.

**6**. Comments and questions from the floor:-

What is the asking price? – on the market at £375,000 but we would get an independent valuation.

What makes us think we can make a success if others have failed, need more people to use it. Historically 80% of residents signed a petition to keep the pub open but do not use it.

Present owners are inexperienced and have made a number of mistakes so someone else could succeed.

If pub is allowed to close the value of properties in the village will drop.

The quality of the food has been unreliable, the fixed price menu was good value but short-lived, speciality evenings successful, fine dining over-priced. Take away menu would be a good idea. Promote coffee and cake, cream teas during the day.

Beer prices too high.

Needs longer opening hours – missed opportunities as open for drinks only for short time on a bank holiday.

Lacks atmosphere – needs to be more welcoming with regular staff.

Needs an area for darts, bar billiards etc.

James Mallinder (District Councillor) pledged his support.

**7**. The chairman asked for volunteers to take this venture forward. The following were willing to join a committee:- Vicky Tinsley, John Reah, Elizabeth Mann, Katie Pettitt, Theresa Stroh, and Jeremy Clark. Richard Barber and Kate Agazarian happy to act in an advisory capacity.

**Conclusion**: A letter will be sent to East Suffolk Council expressing a non-binding interest in purchasing The Swan Public House. A committee will be formed to investigate and take this action forward.