

Toller Porcorum CLT Steering Group Meeting.

Held at the Village Hall on 14th May 2012 at 6.30

Present: Steve Watson, Somerset Devon and Dorset CLT Project. Tim Crabtree, Wessex Community Assets. Robert Aspray, Rural Housing Development Officer West Dorset District Council, Amanda Williams, Synergy Housing Association. Village members: Colin Baker, Barry Rutherford, Debbie Billen, Brian and Jill Baccus, Evelyn Whitcombe, Peggy Denty, Alex Carstairs, Jeremy Stavenhagen, Vanora Hereward, Mick and Jennifer Rolfe, Richard Blackmore, Jean Wallbridge, Rorie Geddes.

Apologies: David Ennals

Colin baker welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Amanda Williams from Synergy.

The minutes of the meeting on the 2nd April 2012 had been distributed and there were no matters arising.

Robert Aspray reported on the Housing Need Survey. He now has had nine responses to the flyer and sent out the registration Form for WDDC Housing Service. This is quite a challenging form and in order to elicit responses he has now sent a single sheet questionnaire. He has six households with eligible need, five two bedroom and one three bedroom house. He expects more to come forward as the project develops.

An updated Project Plan Timeline had been sent out with the Agenda. Owing to the departure of Nigel Lester the Partnership Agreement was still at the draft stage and has slipped a month.

The Partnership Sub-group had worked with Steve Watson and produced a new draft (attached to the agenda). Central to this is the condition that the gift of land is conditional upon the post office being provided capital cost, rent and possibly rates free. This does create an issue for Synergy who need to know; how many homes, how much grant and what costs there may be.

Amanda Williams needs more information before committing to the project. Having made some assumptions she felt that Synergy would struggle to make

it work. There is a maximum grant of £50k per rented unit from the Homes and Communities Agency, regardless of size but no grant for the post office although WDDC might be able to help. Rent is capped at 80% of market value, rents are lower in rural areas and so that limited the amount available to service mortgage borrowings. The grant was lower for shared ownership schemes as capital was available from the sale. Further work was required to develop the scheme and ascertain any extra site costs. Before he left Synergy, Nigel Lester had opened discussion with Margaret Longley and thought that there was the basis for an agreement. There is no market value housing included in the new Local Plan but that could alter under a future Neighbourhood Plan.

There was a discussion about the requirements for the new post office but it was agreed that the costs involved would limit it to something just a little larger than the existing one. Richard Blackmore offered to provide a plan of what was required. Synergy would prepare a scheme for six units with perhaps four for rent and shared equity for two. There was a certain amount of local opposition to two or even three extra units (i.e beyond Vanora Hereward's and Margaret's Longley's land) and no apparent demand either. It was noted that the value of Vanora's site, as the village contribution, was approximately £20k.

It was agreed that Synergy would kindly undertake some further feasibility work at its own cost and risk. For this, the new project manager would be Chris Moglia on [HYPERLINK "mailto:Chris.Moglia@synergyhousing.co.uk" \t "_blank" Chris.Moglia@synergyhousing.co.uk](mailto:Chris.Moglia@synergyhousing.co.uk). Chris would liaise with Rorie Geddes for all the required information and access arrangements.

The Legal Entity group had met with Tim Crabtree on the 9th May and concluded that the Community Benefit Society would be the most appropriate body. However, this is complicated by the issue of the new Post Office having to pay rates which could be avoided if it was run by a charity providing services for community benefit. A charity's ability to trade is quite constrained and so it is suggested that a feasibility study is prepared over the next four weeks with assistance from Dorset Community Action and the Community Shops Network.

In addition Synergy is becoming part of the Aster Group, some elements of

which have exempt charity status. There is a possibility that Aster could take on responsibility for the rates on the Post Office, and make the premises available rent and rates free to the Community Benefit Society, thus avoiding the need to establish a charity. It is recommended that this option is also explored.

The CLT incorporation needs to happen within the next six weeks.

Steve Watson reported that he has obtained tenders for legal services from four firms. . As a result, SDDCLTP can recommend the firm of Cobbetts for legal services such as conveyancing, preparation of a lease, negotiation of the Section 106 Agreement and also CLT incorporation (if required, given that there are model rules for all the legal entities a CLT could adopt) and suggested that Toller CLT consider their services. Ian Moran, of Cobbetts was going to be in Yeovil on Tuesday 29th May at 10.15am and Alex and Vanora offered to meet him at the Somerset County Council offices. Legal costs up to £5k will be covered by WDDC.

The eventual size of the Steering Group would be best at 7-10 members, however the present arrangement did not seem too unwieldy and it was felt that it should stay the same for the next meeting in mid June.

Under AOB it was asked if there would be any assistance for rates from WDDC, the answer is probably no.

Steve Watson will organise the next meeting using Doodle.

The meeting closed at 8pm with a reminder that time is short!