

Minutes of a Meeting of the **SWANAGE COMMUNITY HOUSING STEERING GROUP** held via Zoom video conference platform on **MONDAY 8th MARCH 2021** at **4.30 p.m.**

Present: Mr R Sutcliffe – Chair

Mr J Bishop
Councillor M Bonfield
Councillor T Foster
Councillor A Harris
Councillor D Monkhouse
Mr D Smith
Mr M Suttle (from 4.35 p.m.)
Mrs R Suttle (from 4.35 p.m.)

In Attendance: Ms F Astin – Housing Advisor
Dr M Ayres – Town Clerk
Mrs E Evans – Management Support Officer
Councillor N Rogers
Mr J Sinclair-Taylor

1) **Apologies**

There were no apologies to report for inability to attend the Meeting. Mr Proctor's resignation from the steering group was acknowledged and noted.

It was noted that Mr Sinclair-Taylor would also be standing down, although he would be happy to act in an informal capacity as an advisor to the group, to share his expertise in his capacity as solicitor to numerous charities, and as chair of a housing association. Mr Sinclair-Taylor would not attend meetings on a regular basis, however, an invitation would be extended when required.

2) **Declarations of Interest**

Mr Sutcliffe declared an interest by reason of being a trustee of the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust.

There were no other declarations to record on this occasion.

3) **To approve the minutes of Swanage Community Housing Steering Group, held on 12th February 2021**

It was AGREED:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Swanage Community Housing Steering Group held on 12th February 2021 be approved as a true record.

4) **To consider proposals from the following sub-groups;**

a) **Form of Incorporation**

Consideration was given to a briefing paper which set out a number of proposed incorporation options. Three legal formats had been explored: Company limited by guarantee/Charity, Community Interest Company and Community Benefit Society. It was noted that free consultation sessions with Wessex Community Assets, Wrigley's solicitors and Ms Astin, housing advisor, had been sought to assist with forming the recommendation to the group.

A discussion ensued surrounding the various options which included clarification that a

Community Benefit Society could be formed either with or without charitable status and the impact of this in relation to an ‘asset lock’. An explanation regarding the asset lock required for charitable status was provided and included that if the society was dissolved, any residual assets would be transferred to another organisation with the same or similar charitable purposes. It was also clarified that the CBS would be an ‘exempt charity’ and as such would not be registerable with the Charity Commission, but could register with HMRC to secure the tax advantages related to charitable status.

A further discussion ensued surrounding whether there was the need to form a CLT, as the CBS would hold the legal weight. However, it was agreed that there were clear benefits attaching to CLT status, such as the availability of advice and training from the National CLT Network. It was therefore AGREED :-

TO RECOMMEND:

That the community led housing project should take the form of a Community Land Trust, and be incorporated as a Community Benefit Society with charitable status.

b) Financial Structure

A useful report, prepared by the Finance sub-group, was summarised.

It was reported that several routes of funding had been investigated which included, a mortgage provided by a bank, a government funded grant, and the potential to raise finance through the issue of shares, dependent on the vehicle used for incorporation.

Further to discussion, it was acknowledged that the decision regarding the vehicle for incorporation would impact on the financial route, and detailed financial reports would be sought at the appropriate stage of the project.

c) Review of architect’s brief

It was reported that the sub-group had reviewed the suitability of various proposed sites for development, and consideration of the Draft Dorset Local Plan had formed part of those discussions. It was agreed that no sites should be ruled out at the current time and that additional investigation was required prior to recommendation of a preferred location.

Ms F Astin left the meeting at 6.00 p.m.

5) To consider allocation of sites as part of consultation on Draft Dorset Local Plan

It was noted that the Draft Dorset Local Plan would be discussed at an upcoming Extraordinary Council meeting, being held on Wednesday 10th March 2021, to consider the Council’s response, and site allocation for social housing would most likely form part of the discussions.

6) Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas

a) Government’s response to the local housing need proposals in the ‘Changes to the current planning system’ consultation

The receipt of information was noted.

b) National Community Land Trust Network renewal 2021/22

It was noted that additional information regarding the cost for different levels of membership would be sought, and membership agreed at the Council Meeting, being held on Monday 15th March 2021.

7) Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 14th April at 4.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.