

BUTTERPARK GROUP MEETING

NOTES FROM 25TH APRIL 2017 AT 2PM, THE WATERMARK

1. Introductions were made from those present – Lesley Hughes, Tom Plant (DOVE project); Michelle Fice and Lee Rouse (Brook Housing); South Hams Cllr Kathy Cuthbert; Devon County Cllr Roger Croad (attended for the start of the meeting and outlined his role to date); Ivybridge Town Cllr Ann Laity; Cassandra Harrison (South Hams affordable housing team) and Steve Edwards (Strategic Engagement Manager, Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity, DCC). Apologies were received from Richard Pillar and Craig Robinson.
2. Lesley Hughes outlined the current position which was that the Town Council had confirmed it would proceed with the purchase and the development of the project as outlined in the bid to DCC, with the intention of owning the units for people with moderate learning disabilities and the learning/training hub.

Meetings had been held with Richard Pillar and SHDC planners to ensure that the site, in principle, would be acceptable as proposed. Valuation, legalities and financial aspects were currently being explored.

3. Tom Plant explained the way he had anticipated the learning/training hub operating, as per the document submitted to DCC. A key role was to act as a stepping stone house for someone getting ready to move into the community. It would be necessary to work with the DCC community enabling team. The shared element had to be right at the outset so it was cost effective in the long term. Training based respite. The opportunity to provide respite for other carers was raised by Steve Edwards following consultation events but the group took the view that at this early stage it was important to focus on the core reason for the house and not to broaden the brief too widely, ie it was for people with moderate learning disabilities, not those who would normally require an overnight support package.

KEY POINT – THE PROJECT WOULD PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR ADULTS WITH MODERATE LEARNING DISABILITIES, PARTICULARLY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS OF A LOCAL COHORT. SEEK A PARENT OF ONE YOUNG ADULT TO SERVE ON THE GROUP AS AN “EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE”.

The learning/training hub would enable people to learn how to use technology and live independently, but there were a multitude of other uses, including

hosting events, learning about online shopping but equally the prospect of individual support when needed.

Lee Rouse envisaged it would support those wanting to move out of the family home and have up to a maximum of six months time in the training hub. A transition period rather than just being relocated directly into private rented housing. Cllr Cuthbert hoped that this would result in a reduced need for a support worker long term and hence save money in the longer term. Housing benefits were part of the South Hams responsibility. She also speculated that this could reduce homelessness so less direct workload (albeit small in this case) of having to manage that problem but equally less cost of B&B or specialist emergency respite care.

4. KEY POINT – MEETING NEEDED AS A PRIORITY WITH ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES – COMMISSIONING PLUS SARA BURGESS AND SOPHIE HOLMES – STEVE EDWARDS TO CONTACT RELEVANT OFFICERS AT DCC AND OFFER SOME MEETING DATES TO THOSE WHO WISHED TO ATTEND (MEETING COULD BE HELD AT EXETER)

It was very evident that the approach on which the whole project was based depended on DCC Social Services being able to deliver on the concept outlined in the submission for the Learning/Training hub and the ability to give enabling support via direct payments or an individualised service fund. Tom Plant felt that the best chance of staying outside the framework was to focus on those who needed 18 hours per week (or less), ie under £300.

However the concept was different to that being used at present and there would need to be a commitment to operating in this method, potentially agreeing in advance that Dove Project would manage the budgets and a possible allocation could be two hours for housing management (Brook Housing); Dove 10-14 hours and then the remainder to engage PLUSS for employment support or other ad hoc agencies/specialists as needed.

Ensuring value for money in adult social care was important. Also with the garden area and landscaping of the overall site it was wondered if the Town Council took this on, the options could be explored of employment to maintain the grounds and volunteering opportunities for tenants. The impact on benefits would need to be assessed too. This gardening idea could evolve into a TAPS fund application for 2018/19.

KEY POINT - SHDC HOUSING BENEFITS – ISABELLE BLAKE – CLLR CUTHBERT AND CASSANDRA HARRISON TO ARRANGE, TO GIVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE, EXEMPT ALLOCATION AND DIFFERENCES FOR OVER AGE 25 ETC.

5. Lee Rouse and Michelle Fice explained that there were various routes for managing the housing and Brook Housing would be keen to do this and work with the Town Council to achieve the best outcome – in part it depended how much risk the Town Council wished to share with Brook Housing.

KEY POINT – IVYBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL TO MEET WITH BROOK HOUSING TO UNDERSTAND THE OPTIONS AROUND MANAGING OF THE UNITS AND LEVEL OF SHARED RISK V RENT.

Design of the housing was important and the level of technology. Michelle advised that as part of her degree she understood that there was an assisted technology house in Torbay which she was trying to visit.

KEY POINT – MICHELLE TO ADVISE IF A VISIT TO AN ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY HOUSE IN TORBAY IS POSSIBLE

KEY POINT – MEETING WITH ARCHITECTS IN DUE COURSE TO EXAMINE DESIGN AND ENSURE MEETS NEEDS OF TENANTS.

6. Steve Edwards explained that the Governance of the informal project group was something to be considered with likely sub groups to focus on specific areas. Impact assessments, risks and a Governance framework should be put in place. Membership of the group should be considered and whether there were any people missing who needed to be included.

KEY POINT – LESLEY HUGHES AND STEVE EDWARDS TO MEET AND AGREE THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROJECT.

Steve also questioned the provider engagement network as there were others who could provide support and manage housing. This was important for transparency and to avoid legal challenge further along the line. Lesley Hughes asked those present who else provided the housing support and assistance similar to DOVE project. It seemed that there were groups in Plymouth but not much support by other groups in the Ivybridge area seemed to be known. Lesley advised that the Town Council had worked with the DOVE project over many years and they were a part of the Ivybridge community. Whilst it was accepted that others should be considered to avoid any potential legal challenge in future it was the preference of the Council to continue with the project team as established. Any organisation would need to offer social value and relevant expertise.

KEY POINT – STEVE EDWARDS TO SPEAK WITH SUE GUBB, DCC BUSINESS RELATIONS TEAM, ABOUT OTHER OPERATORS IN THE SECTOR AS IDENTIFIED IN THE PROVIDER ENGAGEMENT NETWORK IN THE COUNTY TO EXPLORE IF THERE WERE ALTERNATIVES TO DOVE PROJECT AND BROOK HOUSING WHO SHOULD BE

CONSIDERED, TO ENSURE THAT TRANSPARENCY AND BEST VALUE OBLIGATIONS WERE MET.

7. Cassandra Harrison referred to the fact that people had put their names on the housing register and getting funding to deliver the assisted units was being explored. There were a few options including 106 affordable home funds, the Community Led Housing money for the South Hams (£400,000 not part of the JV funds) and possibly groups like Devon Communities Together and DALC might have access to money which could assist.

She asked what the likely costs were and Lesley explained that these were being valued currently. As the Town Council would be borrowing from PWLB then it was hoped that up to 50% of the costs of the homes could be funded by the funds held by South Hams and as soon as firm information was available then this would need to be submitted to South Hams for consideration.

8. To conclude – all agreed that the project was important to Ivybridge and potentially if the concept could work could be replicated elsewhere. The Key Points above would be pursued with the priority being the meeting with Social Services, as without their commitment and agreement to the commissioning of the services as outlined then the scheme as envisaged was unworkable.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.