



EXTRAORDINARY BOARD MEETING 12.11.20 (of Directors)

PRESENT

Rhoda Robinson (chair) (RR), Ingrid Morris (IM), Alison Boyd (AB), Josephine Greggain (JG), Sue Hunter (SH), Julia Powley (JP), Norma Pritt (NP), Annette Whitehead (AW), Pete Duncan (PD), David Allen (DA)(part)

APOLOGIES

Karen Hodgson

PROCEEDINGS

This meeting was convened to discuss the latest position on staffing within DBL and more broadly within Cumbria CVS. David Allen (CEO Cumbria CVS) introduced two reports, one looking at the position for DBL and the other for Cumbria CVS as a whole.

DA reported that, in relation to the proposed redundancy of a DBL Project Assistant (PA) post, the process had resulted in one of the current workers being a silent consultee and the other a highly engaged consultee, the latter having raised many questions and counter proposals, all of which were summarised in the CVS report.

In discussion about the general situation, Ingrid raised the issue of the cost implications of the proposed changes at CVS for DBL's budget. David responded that the changes only affect employees who are not on the April 2019 NJC salary scales at present. There might be an increase of £500-£1000 on DBL's budget for its four employees, backdated to September 1st 2020. This would be a one-off increase as any further cost of living increases will be reviewed annually.

JP said that DBL had always set its own salary levels for staff, so this was a significant change. David responded that CVS was described as "the employer" in the partnership agreement and was moving to a single payscale. DA noted that further advice was being taken on accreditation as a "Real Living Wage" employer which would mean that those on the lowest salary levels would receive an annual cost of living increase. .

DA described the existing agreement between DBL and CVS as insufficiently comprehensive and lacking in detail. It is not satisfactory for CVS and needs to be brought into line with the current review. The agreement with DBL can then be re-visited. Julia felt that DBL now needed to agree what the relationship with CVS needed to be in the future. David said that there was a three month notice period if either party wished to withdraw.

DA then introduced and went through the seven steps in the DBL- specific paper. DBL can make a recommendation to CVS as the employer but cannot decide things on its own. DBL needs to consider the seven steps in detail and report back to CVS on what it decides. DBL also needs to discuss and agree on the four recommendations included in parts 5.1 to 5.4 of the paper. CVS will then decide on the next steps and hold one-to-one outcome meetings with the individuals at risk of redundancy.

DA also reported on the up-to-date position with DBL's two project assistants; they both want to stay, and they both could be offered the role as "suitable alternative employment" therefore a

competitive interview will be needed and a single candidate appointed. The unsuccessful candidate will then receive notice of redundancy and will receive the appropriate payment. This person would then be considered for other appropriate roles in CVS should they wish to apply

Although neither of the Project Assistants can be matched against existing CVS vacant posts at grade 2 (or its equivalent) – as there are none available – they can apply for any un-filled posts at any level, but would need to put in an application and be interviewed. If they met the essential criteria for the post they could take priority over other internal CVS candidates – but that is dependent on those candidates own position. There could then be a trial period of up to three months to see if the ‘suitable alternative’ match worked. Either party could decide to end the trial and take whatever redundancy and notice period to which they are statutorily entitled..

DA explained that an error had been made in the risk of redundancy letter sent to one of the PAs and confirmed that DBL would only be asked to pay the statutory amount (1 months salary plus any annual leave entitlement (£700-£900)), with CVS picking up the balance.

DA also confirmed that no-one from CVS is matched to the DBL’s PA post (as they do not match the job description or salary grade) so would only be considered if the post remained unfilled. However, CVS posts will be open to application to the DBL PA’s with the process starting next week.

IM asked how voluntary redundancy works in terms of other jobs at CVS. David said that it doesn’t affect an individual’s ability to apply for other CVS jobs, but it’s not possible to go through a voluntary redundancy process and apply for one of these jobs at the same time. Many employees feel it is usually better to take a voluntary redundancy package than to be made redundant by their employer .

DA left the meeting at this point to enable the DBL Board to discuss the issues raised in the paper.

Board members went through each of the four issues raised in the DBL paper. (Sections 5.1-5.5)

On 5.1, members felt they were committed to the community centre investment as part of their Big Local legacy; to the playground, which has been on the cards since the start of the project, with the allocated funding needing to be retained to ensure that it goes ahead; grants to the Rugby Club have already been made; an agreement is in place with the Club for Young People and the grant has already been reduced for budget reasons; the housing development is a committed project and there remains uncertainty around what DBL will need to pay for to get the scheme to start on site. No further external grant funding for this project is likely to be available. And finally, the Community Chest and Transport grant funds offer the only flexibility available to the Board over the next two years and these small sums provide important investment in small scale community projects in the village. Overall, all the above funds are being spent on improving the village and no further grant income is anticipated to support them. The Board therefore re-confirmed its previous decision to save funds in its budget by reducing its staffing costs and remained unchanged in its view that there exists over-capacity from the employment of two project assistants and that these are the posts that need to be reduced to one single project assistant role. Furthermore, the board confirmed its view that they still required additional funding to be redirected from the project to meet previously unforeseen costs; and that they did NOT have an over-capacity in the time allocated to either the DBL Handyman role or Project Manager role and therefore these roles did not match with the redundancy criteria previously stated. The Board also discussed the possibility of redeployment of staff into other roles but confirmed that the need for financial cost-savings over-rode such options and that the anticipated impact of these decisions on the community and project was acceptable.

On 5.2, the board determined that there there is no desire to find alternative sources of income to fund both PA posts, as much of the role has now changed (not least because of Covid) and workload has reduced considerably. . Even if external funding was available, it would be very difficult to justify a staff salary in these circumstances. The Board felt this was an unrealistic option.

On 5.3, The Board felt that the introduction of two 9-hour posts would be too dis-jointed, not cost effective, and was not likely to be viable from the point of view of the project and from other potential applicants for the role. As such, the board rejected this option.

On 5.4, the Board were under the impression that one of the PAs had requested voluntary redundancy. Ingrid informed the meeting that her understanding was that she had indicated that whilst she wished to apply for the PA role in DBL, she also wanted to be considered for voluntary redundancy and to potentially apply for two other posts in CVS.

Overall, the Board decided that it wished to confirm its previous decisions made in June/July 2020 to make one of the Project Assistant posts redundant and report this back to CVS for their consideration and for them to take matters forward

PD then left the meeting and DA re-joined to be available for any questions that may have arisen. None were raised.

DA left the meeting again and the Board went on to consider other matters on the agenda.

Land Development IM & SH had a catch up meeting with HLP on 11/11/20 who advised that the planners had 30 objections during the last consultation period. HLP had also met with H21 and discussed the possibility of requesting a pause in the planning application in order to submit a redesign. BH advised that you get a 'free go' at a redesign. The scheme would still need to be 3 stories to keep the overall costs, of a larger footprint, down. The apartment block would sit further away from Chapel Street with no windows overlooking the school, thus addressing objections raised to the scheme. Elliots would then look at costings. H21 are committed to the dementia concept of the design as well as the atrium, though communal spaces will no doubt need to be reduced.

SH & IM had a meeting with H21 (12/11/20) who advised that Castles and Coasts (housing association) have expressed an initial interest in the developing the bungalows on the site and are looking at the viability of these. BH advised that the bungalows are an expensive part of the build and suggested we could add some cottage flats to the scheme to make it more viable.

The two housing associations would share the infrastructure costs, H21 have worked collaboratively like this before. Separate heads of terms (HOT's) would need to be drawn up with both organisations. H21 sent us their draft HOT'S which are much simpler than the ones drawn up by our lawyers Ward Hadaway. They advised that HOT's would not be signed until certain conditions (planning and grant approval, LA agreement re rent levels, confirmation of scheme viability, H21 Board approval etc) were met. IM requested H21 provide a bit more detail on their draft HOT's so that DBL can run it past their lawyers, which they agreed to do. Any HE funding for the scheme won't be approved until April 2021.

SH advised that HLP will do a redesign by the end of this week for DBL to consider. If DBL & H21 are happy with it, HLP will ask for a pause in the planning application in order to submit the redesign.

AGM Date Our management accounts are yet to be completed by the accountants (possible delays due to Covid) and IM advised that she does not currently have capacity to work on the annual report as more urgent work needs to take priority. In view of this, it was decided to postpone the AGM from 7 December 2020 until sometime in the new year, hopefully January.