



Distington Big Local
Extraordinary Board meeting
held on Thursday April 15th at 3pm, via Zoom

Attendees: Rhoda Robinson (RR) Chair), Norma Pritt (NP), Sue Hunter (SH), Alison Boyd (AB), Josephine Greggain (JG), Annette Whitehead (AW), Julia Powley (JP), Elaine Ismay (EI), Pete Duncan (PD)

Apologies: None

Purpose of the meeting:

To discuss and agree the way forward for DBL, following the increasingly acrimonious local campaign against Big Local and the housing project.

Proceedings:

RR welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained, mainly for new Board member (EI), how all Board members were feeling, following the increasingly toxic Facebook campaign against them and the housing project. It was impossible to change people's minds and everyone was feeling ill because of it. The problem for Board members was they had to live or work in the village and this was now extremely uncomfortable. The unanimous view was that this would only get worse and that nobody felt they could continue as Board members in these circumstances.

RR and PD explained that it was not possible for the whole Board to walk away from DBL immediately – there were legal and financial responsibilities that had to be complied with and there were responsibilities to the three DBL staff. Although this had been in some Board members minds, on reflection they had realised that this was correct. Board members said they were particularly concerned about Ingrid as she had borne the brunt of all the hard work over the last few years and had suffered personal abuse after the AGM.

PD informed the meeting that he had had a phone call from a resident [REDACTED] who had been in touch with Local Trust. He had put himself forward as a neutral, offering to help establish a new community association. Board members felt this might not be all it seems as he appeared to be one of the objectors, although he was not a resident.

Board members then discussed how they should proceed and unanimously agreed to the following:

DBL intends to withdraw their planning application, following discussions with Housing 21 and HLP Architects.

DBL would prepare a statement, with help from Local Trust, which would state:

1. Distington Big Local intends to withdraw the planning application made in March 2021.
2. All current DBL Board members to step down 28 days after the Statement is issued, to allow enough time for new members to come forward and take their place. This will enable DBL to con-

tinue in the short term and remain in compliance with its legal, financial and Local Trust requirements.

3. If no new Board members come forward (or not enough to meet DBL's legal and Local Trust requirements), DBL will be wound up, staff will be made redundant, the Legion land will need to be transferred to an appropriate alternative organisation in compliance with the CBS rules and Big Local funding for current and future projects will end, unless and until Local Trust agree to a new Partnership subsequently being formed in the village.

The Board agreed that a statement, to include the above three points, should be drafted by Ingrid and PD, with support from Local Trust Comms and then endorsed by all Board members and then circulated through the usual local media channels and appropriate local organisations. The statement to be finalised by Friday April 16th pm at the latest. It was hoped that this might reduce some of the tension in the village.

There was a brief discussion about whether a new round of community consultation might be carried out, but Board members agreed this was not something that they would be prepared to undertake whilst still in post over the next 28 days.

SH explained her understanding from the CBS rules of what would happen to DBL and the land if no-one comes forward to replace the current Board.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday April 20th at 10am.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.