



**Distington Big Local
Partnership, Board & General Meeting
Held on Thursday 29 April 2021 at 4 pm, via Zoom [REDACTED]**

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

In Attendance: Ingrid Morris (IM), Pete Duncan (PD), Jayne Entwistle (JE), Simon Underwood (SU), David Alcock (DA, Anthony Collins Solicitors), Stuart Evans (SE, Anthony Collins), Precious Mealia (PM, Anthony Collins)

Apologies: Vic Askew (VA)

Not Present: Karen Hodgson (KH)

55.21 RR welcomed everyone to the meeting.

56.21 Conflict of Interest Item 51.21 of previous minutes; JE confirmed there were no conflicts of interest re other wider work Local Trust were doing with Anthony Collins solicitors.

57.21 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting on 23rd April 2021.

58.21 Update on Resignations To date we have not received a written resignation from KH. This is the fourth consecutive meeting of non attendance and no apologies issued by KH. This issue will now be addressed in writing.

59.21 Update on Meetings & Correspondence HLP & H21 - H21 agreed to a short pause in the planning application which was implemented on 23 April 2021. The planners confirmed that the determination date has been amended to the 22 July 2021. Our contact at H21 advised she will put together a report for H21's board, their approval is needed before H21 can confirm they would take the scheme on without DBL if planning goes ahead and is approved. There are no rules to say that a 3 storey building can't be built in Distington. The viability assessments backs up the need for 3 storeys. The scheme can only be turned down by planners on planning matters, but councillors might not back it due to the amount of local opposition. If planning is turned down, there would be grounds for appeal. From November 2020 HLP have redesigned the scheme to a H21 brief, they now have two clients DBL & H21. Withdrawing the planning application will have implications for HLP, they will draw up a fee reconciliation to ensure clarity on what fees are still outstanding.

Copeland Borough Council The Housing Strategy & Inclusion Officer, has advised that CBC still very much support the scheme and will do anything they can to help our current situation. They suggested a meeting with H21 & DBL on 12th May 2021, which has now been arranged.

Employer's Agent, Elliott's David Pearson has sent an email stating concern about what has happened as well as good wishes for the future.

mediation as they have absolute discretion. Any board has the power to change its mind, it is only bound by its rules, not its previous decisions. JE advised that LT contact a consortium that includes Cooperatives UK which means that engaging them might not be a suitable route to take, however there are other similar organisations who could be approached.

Only 3 people have come forward to date expressing interest in potentially becoming members. DA advised that a minimum of 5 is needed for board membership for the CBS, they can operate in the short term with a quorum of 3. A minimum of 5 is also needed for general members before they can hold a meeting. The board would need to do all it could to recruit new members. The rules don't state what to do if there aren't enough members, in this case the board would need to decide if the CBS could continue without a minimum number of members. The existing board are in place until mid July, they could work alongside another group, or state that the new members become board members when the current board resigns.

A new un-constituted Big Local partnership (or board) could be formed. To comply with Local Trust rules it should have minimum of 8 members, 51% of whom are residents. JE advised that it could start off with less than 8 as long as robust action plan was in place for recruiting more members.

DA advised that if the Distington Community Trust (DCT) is dissolved, 'any property that remains, the members may resolve to give or transfer to another charitable body with objects similar to that of the CLT. If no such institution exists, the property shall be transferred or given to the Housing Association Charitable Trust'. The land could be disposed of before the CBS is closed down, but the board needs to act in the best interest of Distington, as stated in the DCT rules, which could mean letting the planning application run. If planning permission is secured the value of the land will increase.

SE advised that a new planning application will not need to be submitted if the applicant name is changed as it is not a major change to the scheme. Planning authorities can be difficult to deal with and SE would be happy to write to them on our behalf. SE advised the best course of action might be to leave the application in until a decision is made. If permission is refused, an appeal can be made to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol which H21 could head up to take the pressure off DBL.

In the first statement issued, the board said they 'intend to withdraw planning application', but DA noted that the statement was made under duress. He also advised that the board are entitled to change their minds. The residents were consulted about the land development. If the planning application is left in to run its course and a new board is in place on 22 July (planning determination date), it will be up to them to decide whether to build on the land or let the application lapse.

There seem to be about 100 – 200 objectors, it's difficult to tell, ACT could help to find out how many are for and against scheme.

Currently we have no legally signed agreement with H21. We are both clients of HLP, but our contract with them is not a joint one.

62.21 New Statement from the Board DA advised the statement needs to be non committal & indicated the following: 1. It's not an automatic handover of board members 2. We are working to a timetable. 3. We are in the process of taking advice on a range of issues. PD & IM will draft the statement, Local Trust, David Alcock and board members will have an input and sign it off. The earliest it will be issued is next week.

63.21 Staffing Issues & Cumbria CVS CVS will provide support where they can, they advised that a statement shouldn't have been issued saying staff may be made redundant. Interim help could be brought in to assist with the day to day running of things. The board could turn to organisations such as the Charity Commission, Voluntary Sector North West, National Council for Voluntary Organisations or CVS's Chair for help.

If a new board is formed for DCT the staff can remain in place. If a new constituted organisation is formed with an LTO in place, employees are entitled to transfer to that new organisation. Staff are employed by CVS but work for DBL.

64.21 AOB PD is on leave next week SU will provide support needed in his absence.

Distington in Bloom Community Chest Application – Their previous application was dated March 2020 but not paid until October 2020 due to Covid. This makes their current application valid which was agreed for payment.

65.21 Date of Next Meeting Friday 7 May 2021 at 12 noon via Zoom

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.