

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Accommodation Working Group

Held on Thursday 18 February 2021

Present:

Councillors: W Taylor (Chair), A Cartie, K Nisbet, J R Potts, M Richardson, S Stanger

Officers: J Hughes, Town Clerk, M Wilkinson, Deputy Town Clerk, M Hawthorne, Committee Clerk

Also Present: Thom Bradley

The Chair welcomed Thom to the meeting and referred to the previous AWG where members agreed with the concept of a multi-use facility or community hub.

Thom confirmed that he has spoken to a Regeneration Officer about having a multi-purpose building in Blyth town centre and the advice he got was to identify potential partners and buildings. Thom added that he has been looking at examples of Community Land Trust, as a possible option to pursue. There is support available nationally to look at how to develop a CLT and anyone wishing to do so would have to register with the Community Land Trust in order to move forward with it.

The definition of a CLT:

Community land trusts are set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.

Community land trusts are nonprofit, **community**-based organizations designed to ensure **community** stewardship of **land**. ... To **do** so, the **trust** acquires **land** and maintains ownership of it permanently. With prospective homeowners, it enters into a long-term, renewable lease instead of a traditional sale.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that he has been informed from a NCC representative that there is no County Council managed accommodation available within the town centre at the moment. The only space available is in Richard Stannard House which is managed by Advance. This option

has previously been explored and members did not feel it was suitable for BTC's requirements.

It was agreed that in order to move forward BTC need to redefine their requirements in terms of space for both meetings and staff accommodation. The Town Clerk said this is an opportunity to look at working in a more flexible way adding it been demonstrated how effectively this can be done over the past 11 months. The Chair asked the Town Clerk to seek the views of staff.

Members talked about the pros and cons of owning a building outright and perhaps owning a facility that would generate an income. The Town Clerk reminded them of the timescale for acquiring a building and carrying out improvements (2-2.5 years) and that there is only 18 months before BTC have to renegotiate the lease on Arms Everytne House. He has provided Anne Lawson with some additional information and asked that she look at the situation again to see if there is anything that can be done in relation to the town centre plans. The Chair said he would like NCC to do a feasibility study to see if there was anything available to meet the requirements.

Following discussion on how to proceed it was agreed:

1. The Town Clerk will have an informal discussion with Steven Reay regarding lease of Arms Everytne and possibility of renegotiating a shorter one.
2. The Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk to redefine the brief re office requirements, particularly from a staffing point of view. He will also consult with staff.
3. Thom Bradley to gather more information on Community Land Trust
4. The Town Clerk to speak to Anne Lawson to see if anything can be done about town centre plans
5. Gather information from larger Town Councils on their accommodation.
6. The Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk to have a further meeting with Thom to share ideas.

Joseph Hughes
Town Clerk

23 February 2021