Minutes of the Meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee

of Saddleworth Parish Council Held at the Civic Hall, Lee Street, Uppermill on

Thursday 29th November 2018

Present: Parish Councillors: Rob Knotts (Vice Chair)

Geoff Bayley

Paul Fryer

Borough Councillors: Pam Byrne

Valerie Leach

Andrew Fletcher

Geoff Willerton

Georgina Brownridge

Lisa MacDonald (left 10:30am)

**193. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Sam Al-Hamdani, John McCann and Jane Soriente (Oldham Council).

**194. Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2018 were **APPROVED and SIGNED**.

**195.** **Matters arising**

Cllr Knotts said that he and the Clerk had met with one of the web designers from Cornerstones to go through some outstanding issues in respect of the website but Cllr Beeley’s input is needed as she was steering this part of the project. Cllr Al-Hamdani had completed his work on the survey and had raised some queries with the other members of the committee for which he was awaiting feedback before it could be sent out.

Cllr Knotts said that he had understood from past discussions that funding would be available for the council to employ a project manager. However, he had since been informed that funding would only be available for an independent project consultant. He said that an invitation to tender for the role and for that of a system analyst, which may be combined with that of the project manager, had been sent out with a deadline of 14th December. He estimated that the cost could be between £15k and £20k. The Parish Council has allocated up to £7.5k to help fund the position.

He informed the meeting that he had written to the House of Commons regarding the availability of funding but had received a response stating that they were unable to allocate additional funds despite recognising the complexity of the project.

**196. Actions agreed at the last meeting**

1. **Unoccupied properties in Delph – update from Cllr. Bayley**

Cllr Bayley circulated an update of his report which included the results from an expanded search. He said that further investigations are to be carried out. Cllr Knotts thanked him for his very comprehensive report. Andrew Fletcher suggested, and it was **AGREED** that the report be circulated to the other villages who would be asked to complete a similar piece of work.

Cllr Knotts asked whether it would count towards the GMSF target if empty homes were brought back into use. He said that he understood that financial incentives were available to help fund any work required. Georgina Brownridge said that the identification of empty properties was the responsibility of the Housing Strategy Team and Cllr Knotts asked if she could find out if they are conducting any work specifically for Saddleworth which could be incorporated into the evidence base.

Cllr Byrne asked whether new properties which are already being planned would count towards the GMSF target. Andrew Fletcher said that housing already in the pipeline would count, the difference between these and the GMSF figure being the target which will have to be found. Cllr Leach said that it is unlikely that the empty properties would count towards the GMSF target as the owners may have reasons for keeping them vacant which would result in a shortfall in the number required.

1. **Administrative support – update from Lisa MacDonald**

This item has been superceded by the invitation to tender for a project manager/system analyst.

**c) Taxes on empty properties and empty business premises**

Cllr Knotts said that Council Tax is payable on habitable vacant properties and asked if the same applies to business rates. Cllr Leach said that the regulations regarding business rates had recently changed and councils are now able, provided strict criteria are met, to retain a larger percentage of the amount collected. Given the complexity of the issue it was **AGREED** that no further investigation into this issue be undertaken.

**197. Survey Launch**

Cllr Knotts said that he needs to speak to Cllr Al-Hamdani about how soon the electronic survey will be available on line. The Clerk said that hard copies would also be required for people who did not have access to the internet. There was a discussion as to how many hard copies would be required and collection and drop off points would need to be identified and advertised. It was **AGREED** that Dobcross would not need to participate in the survey as they had already completed the work. Cllr Knotts said that he would raise the issue at the meeting of the Community Associations later today and ask for their input into distribution and collection. He said that the survey launch would now probably take place in January.

**198. Funding**

Cllr Knotts said that, once a project manager has been appointed, the project costs would need to be reassessed and a new funding bid made.

**199. Website and Training:**

Cllr Knotts said that he will ask the community associations later today for the contact details of their representatives.

**200. Any other business:**

Georgina Brownridge referred to her email of 15th November in which she informed the group that Oldham Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is now available on their website. She said that the SHLAA incorporates land identified in the call for sites but excluded any which had been discounted by Oldham Council, for example the land at Lower Turf Lane, Scouthead. She said that the Government have now confirmed their housing figures and the GMSF housing figures are now expected in the new year.

Cllr Knotts said that he understood that the government are considering introducing measures to make it possible for local authorities to acquire land at less that market value and asked how developers could be encouraged to utilise brown field before green field sites. Andrew Fletcher said that this would be done by a phased release of sites.

**201. Workshop Session – Update of Timeline**

A workshop session took place to review and update the project timeline. Cllr Knotts said that he would update the GANT chart for discussion at the next meeting.

**202. Dates and times of next meetings**

**13th December 2018 – please note change of date**

31st January 2019 28th February 2019

28th March 2019 25th April 2019

at 9:30am