

## BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

### APPROVED Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20 November 2012 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr T Lupton (Chair)  
Cllr D Boulding  
Cllr E Cansdale  
Cllr C Friend  
Cllr P Harris  
Cllr A Lidgett

Ms T O'Sullivan - Action with Communities in Rural Kent  
Mrs A Swannick – Clerk

2 Parishioners attended.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the meeting would be conducted as an open meeting for items 5 and 6. A vote was taken. **Agreed.**

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr B Hewitt due to work commitments and Cllr H Ruse due to attendance at a School Governor's meeting.

#### 2. Any Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

#### 3. Any Changes to the Register of Members Interests

There were no changes>

#### 4. Presentation of the results of the Housing Needs Survey

Tessa O'Sullivan went through the Housing Needs Survey. A breakdown of results was distributed.

#### 5 & 6. Discussion and questions regarding the results of the Housing Needs Survey

The meeting closed to allow parishioner participation.

**Question 1:** There was a 25% response rate. Were there more responses from people requiring affordable housing or homeowners?

**Answer 1:** Don't know. It is hard to tell what percentage you could increase the figures to. The Housing Association is unlikely to build 22 houses and would probably build less because they do not want surplus to exceed demand.

**Question 2:** When you looked at the rent people could afford findings indicated people could not afford commercial rates.

**Answer 2:** Affordable rents have changed, in particular last year. It is currently 80% of the local private rental market in the area. A person could be entitled to claim some housing benefit.

**Question 3:** In a development of under 20 units, what percentage of just rentable properties would there be?

**Answer 3:** If there were 11 properties, 4 would be shared ownership and 6 would be rented.

**Question 4:** There are people in the village who cannot afford to buy but could afford to rent. Some are currently living with their parents, but could not afford shared ownership. They would still have to find 10% of a 50% mortgage and that is still difficult. There are also some people whose income is too high to be eligible for rented property but too low for the open market. Why is there a maximum of rented and shared ownership?

**Answer 4:** There is nothing to say that there has to be shared ownership.

**Question 5:** Who builds the house for renting or shared ownership?

**Answer 5:** It is the Housing Association. Local authorities used to build and rent out council housing and most stopped. Housing Associations took over. They are usually non-profit organisations who build social housing and rent it out.

**Question 6:** Is it up to the Housing Association if they build shared or rented accommodation?

**Answer 6:** They would look very carefully at local needs.

**Question 7:** Are they charities?

**Answer 7:** No. Housing Associations started in London where there were a lot of empty houses.

**Question 8:** If Housing Associations are “not for profit” do they receive money from Central Government?

**Answer 8:** They have to make a profit, but the Homes and Communities Agency give grants to enable Housing Associations to build.

**Question 9:** Do they physically build houses?

**Answer 9:** They use contractors – local ones. Housing Associations have to build to a higher standard than private homes. They have to build to Level 3; they are very well insulated using relevant technologies. ABC was one of the first authorities in Kent to start building themselves.

**Question 10:** If a community can find a patch of land then would houses be cheaper to build?

**Answer 10:** They don't get involved in negotiations. The Housing Association does that.

**Question 11:** Can a plot of land not available for the open market be used such as agricultural land?

**Answer 11:** If there is a proven need.

**Question 12:** The Housing Needs Survey demonstrates the village has a proven need. Having demonstrated that what are the next steps?

**Answer 12:** If the parish council decided that it wanted to investigate further, that would mean looking for land and normally Tessa O'Sullivan would meet with the parish council to identify any potential sites. Notes would be taken to send to the planners, and they would come to see if any sites were suitable/have potential. The parish council could state its preferences so long as the planners do not rule that site out. Tessa O'Sullivan would write to the landowner to see if they would be interested to talk to the Housing Association, and at that stage the Housing Association would come in.

**Question 13:** Is there a Housing Association prepared to do this?

**Answer 13:** English Rural Housing Association is one. There are others building in the Ashford area.

**Question 14:** The parish council commissioned the survey and we have discussed the next steps the parish council has to be involved in. Could another group of people say they would do it?

**Answer 14:** It could work with people in the community, but it doesn't have to be the parish council if another group wanted to do it. Normally it is the parish council.

**Question 15:** If there is land owned by ABC, should they be approached? The village has a social housing need.

**Answer 15:** Yes, that has happened.

**Question 16:** Are you suggesting that if the parish council or someone in the community does nothing you would look to see if there was land available?

**Answer 16:** Only if you wanted sites looked for. At the site survey stage Tessa O'Sullivan could advertise that land was being sought and ask people to let her know.

**Question 17:** At some stage the parish council needs to consider whether it wants to move forward. What are the next steps?

**Answer 17:** There are three options to be considered by the Council:

- 1) Yes, the parish council would like to work with you
- 2) Yes, please do it on our behalf
- 3) Not interested and do nothing further

**Question 18:** Most people responding do want to see housing go to village people. Can it be restricted to applicants having a robust connection to the village?

**Answer 18:** There is a Section 106 planning agreement. If no applicants for housing have a local connection the net widens to take in applications from the next village.

**Question 19:** It has been explained that in Ashford there is an alternative way that housing is offered. If a house becomes available to someone local the next home that becomes available goes to someone on the Ashford list.

**Answer 19:** That generally applies to what is called Council Housing to ensure that 50% of housing stock goes to local people. Local Needs Housing can only be made available to people with local connections.

**The Clerk was asked to obtain a list of what is local needs housing and what is council housing in Biddenden.**

**Question 20:** Looking at the figures in the Housing Needs Survey, is Biddenden an area in which it is more difficult to afford housing?

**Answer 20:** Having looked at proper for sale, the cheapest was for an apartment costing £160k. The next cheapest was £180k. Biddenden is not unique, but in order to buy an apartment costing £160k you would need a deposit of £23k.

**Question 21:** What is the minimum size of land required for development?

**Answer 21:** It was thought that it was approximately 1 acre for 8 houses, but Tessa O'Sullivan would check this.

The meeting re-opened.

The Chairman stated that the Housing Survey and the information contained in it had been most helpful. The Council needs to formally consider whether it wants to go ahead with identifying sites for social housing or not and whether it wishes to be involved in the land selection process. The Chairman recommended that this issue should not be taken further tonight but that the council should discuss the matter further at its next meeting and whether it wishes to go ahead and how it goes about it. **This was agreed.**

The Chairman thanked Tessa O'Sullivan for attending the meeting to explain the survey and for answering questions.

The meeting closed at 2030.

Alison Swannick  
Parish Clerk

Tel: 07783 223450