



A Community Benefit Society
The Shop & Post Office Great Street Norton Sub Hamdon Somerset TA14 6SG

Minutes of The Board of Directors of Norton sub Hamdon Community Land Trust Ltd

Held on Tuesday 28th November 2023, 7.30pm in the Reading Room.

Attendees: Niall Clifford Chair (NC)
Lindsay Higgins (LH)
Anne Fairweather (AF)
Simon Harris (SH)
Ian Murray (IM)
Rowena Asley (RA)
John Forsyth (JF)
Jonny Dart (JD)

1. Apologies

Brian Wickins
Jennie Harris

2. Declaration of Interest

None

3. Approval of Minutes from Board meeting, 24th October.

Approved, then signed & dated by NC
Jonny Dart welcomed as a new board member

4. Solar

NC referred to his email that he'd previously circulated to all board members. His view was that the two covenants on the land could be a problem although IM did have a suggestion as to how they could be resolved by approaching the parties concerned for approval for a change of use, with the opportunity of a tribunal if there was a refusal.

NC & JD to approach both Abri & the Holloways'.

Costs excluding VAT from South Somerset Community Energy Suppliers (SSCES) the potential partners - total is £154,000 which we are obligated to provide 50.5% of with the revenue being shared of an annual income of £9,700 & annual costs to run are between £1,000 - £2,000.

Planning permission precludes a security fence but the insurers for the site will require one. The money raised for this project will have to come from people buying shares or investing in it. The going rate for energy schemes is anywhere between 4 & 7%, which is a lot on a very small income.

The original plan of an Energy Club was for 2 reasons, to provide cheaper energy for as many people in the community as we could manage & also a means of increasing the yield per KW hr generated. However we need an up & running installation to partner with & we may not now have enough bandwidth to cope with this.

IM felt that the project shouldn't be dropped completely & that the covenants should be explored initially as in time, as an example, costs of solar panels could drop.

LH expressed her lack of confidence in the prospective partner, SSCES, which NC shared. LH's reasoning was that they had persuaded the CLT to chip in for the permission licence to join the grid, which the knowledge that it is only valid until January. NC explained that was an industry standard.

NC suggested putting the project on hold whilst the covenants were investigated, also looking at other potential partners &/or renting out the whole project once in place. Also that he would check the planning permission expiry date. There were no objections to this as it also gave some control.

5. Finance

LH explained her recent report that she had circulated to the board members.

The baselines used were from last months report showing the overall CLT & the shop & post office with the aim now of tracking the shop & post office into profitability & sustainability.

Currently stock bought in for Christmas has driven the trend down although it should eventually get above the zero line for the shop by the end of the year.

The Shanty night brought in over £1000 & we are receiving between £100 - £140 per mth regularly from the counter box.

It was identified that the shop was holding more long standing stock than perhaps needed & the manageress's advice would be sought.

Energy pledges are still at £15,000.
Admin issues with Go Cardless are still ongoing.
A letter has now been drafted to all pledgers re donations.
The bank account is in a healthy state.

AF agreed to deal with the energy stats.

LH would like to continue with the Finance Committee in its current form although a change of the standing orders to allow more outside help would be very helpful.
This was agreed upon & IM will look into the possibility.

A shared vision &/or business plan is still needed & a draft plan will be drafted by LH.
Claire & Ian Chignell to be invited to the next finance meeting for an update on costing & pricing progress.

Liability insurance has been arranged with better cover than last year.
VAT submission has gone in.
IM has submitted the accounts to the FCA.

JF explained the progression of the shop trading has improved from last year with a trend of more people using & spending more in the shop. However, currently, we are delivering a margin profit slightly below the average.

Roof repair - NC to make further enquiries with the landlord.
Biffa are wanting to increase their price, IM to check our current contract.

It was discussed about changing the contract with WorldPay, the card supplier. Also the need to change the till & card reader although it would cost several thousand pounds to achieve.

JF reminded the board of the impending 9.8% rise in the cost of living wage that was due.

6. Secretary & Action Log

IM discussed the action log -

The Post Office are still dealing with the admin to get Nicki as Postmistress.

7. Shop & PO

Thanks to Jane Naughton for continuing to train the new shop volunteers.

SH brought the board up to date regarding Nicki's recent bereavement with the loss of her father & how well she had made the balance with work & arranging cover.

Both Sara & Katie had been personally thanked for their help & flexibility. SH to arrange a card & flowers for her.

The opportunity of a new veg supply has been suggested on a sale or return basis with a farm at Bower Hinton. This was met with enthusiasm by the board. The logistics however need fine tuning with regards to purchasing what can't be supplied by them & from where it's sourced & so this will be looked in to in the new year.

Moving the wooden sideboard from the office/stock room into the shop had been suggested. IM thought perhaps that could wait until the roof had been repaired in case any other decoration was needed.

The DeFib attached to the shop was not currently in operation due to a flat battery. A new one had been requested via the local first responder Simon Merrett & the money initially raised to cover it, £320. (Some of the shop volunteer's tea/coffee fund, some fund raising money via Lindsay Elliott & an anonymous donor). Jennie Harris is organising a pub quiz in the new year to raise funds.

Overall ownership of the unit was unsure & SH wondered if the CLT could take responsibility for it by having a separate fund within the finances. Initially it was thought do-able although the CLT covered many communities & not just Norton. JF would contact Chiselborough PC to see how they ran theirs & IM to approach NsH PC with a view of assisting with the fund holding.

A staff issue was discussed whereby an invoice had been received concerning a safety check, when in fact it wasn't required in the first place. Due to its seriousness the likely outcome would be a written warning which the board approved.

RA then discussed some suggestions put forward by the volunteers which included -

The request to reintroduce the screen at the shop counter, as 1 volunteer had left as a result (SH & NC to assess for a different format). The veg quality & the till reader display for the customers (both currently in hand).

8. Marketing

IM said that the posts on Facebook and Instagram were doing well and that a marketing campaign with other suppliers is planned for the spring. IM has designed labels and stickers that promote Norton Local Produce that can be affixed to both the existing and upcoming local produce supplies. The branding was approved.

Louise will be doing a table at the Table Top sale with the proceeds for the shop

9. Shop Roof

Already covered.

10. New membership

1 new member approved - Pam Rastall

11. A O B

None

Next meeting dates -

Village Hall 7.30pm, 23rd January .

proposed - 27th February RR, 7.30pm (JD not available)