

URN: 19-184

Subject: Community Housing Fund Update

Report to: ELT

19 May 2021

Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

10 Jun 2021

Report by: Sue Bolan – Enabling & Empty Homes Officer



SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is to provide members with an update on the Community Housing Fund and the community land trusts established in the borough.

1. Background

- 1.1 In December 2016 Great Yarmouth Borough Council received the first tranche of monies for the Community Housing Fund from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) followed by a second tranche in January 2017, the two amounts totalled £652,770.
- 1.2 On 5th September 2019, this committee approved the Community Housing Fund Policy which continues to provide grants to new organisations to assist in establishing a legal entity and loans to organisations to support schemes to planning application submission. This report provides an update on the current status of the community led housing organisations funded through the Community Housing Fund.

2. Community Led Organisations

- 2.1 There are four established community land trusts in the borough.

- Flegg CLT
- Great Yarmouth CLT – also know as Yarmouth Roads.
- Lothingland CLT
- Hopton CLT

Each organisation has chosen to form as a Community Land Trust (CLT) which enables the organisation to hold land in perpetuity as a community asset.

2.2 FLEGG CLT

Flegg CLT have appointed a new Chair and Vice Chair due to the previous holders stepping down.

Flegg CLT contacted other parishes within the former Flegg Rural District Council area and as such have increased their membership. The areas covered by the Flegg CLT includes;

- Somerton
- Martham
- Repps with Bastwick
- Rollesby
- Hemsby
- Stokesby with Herringby
- Caister

The CLT are in discussions with the Property and Assets team regarding the acquisition of a long lease of a property and with a charity who owns land in the area covered by Flegg CLT.

Flegg CLT continue to meet virtually each month.

2.3 GREAT YARMOUTH CLT

This is our newest CLT and currently the most active.

Working with Broadland Housing Association the CLT visited and appraised a scheme in the town centre making use of three buildings, unfortunately this proved unviable for the CLT at such an early stage in their formation.

The CLT created the 'Save Our Priory' campaign when the Priory Centre was recently advertised by the liquidator. They successfully registered the property as a community asset and made two bids for the property working with the YMCA. Unfortunately, their bids were unsuccessful, but their campaign has increased the CLT's profile in the community.

The CLT are currently reviewing two opportunities in the town, both being empty properties to convert to flats and both require working closely with The Preservation Trust. It is expected that they will be making a bid for funding to support both properties being renovated.

Great Yarmouth CLT continue to meet virtually each month.

2.4 LOTHINGLAND CLT

Before the pandemic struck, Lothingland CLT were exploring 2 sites as possibilities for development however, they had to put these discussions on hold when the pandemic struck as they were having difficulties meeting as a group and with landowners.

Lothingland will become active again once restrictions are lifted.

2.5 HOPTON CLT

Unfortunately, Hopton CLT has been inactive this year given the pandemic. It is expected that this CLT will need to completely restart. The Council is monitoring the situation to ensure that work continues it is a possibility that Hopton and Lothingland will merge into one CLT.

3. Locality

- 3.1 Locality are providing support to the existing CLT's through the contract in place, this contract is set to be reviewed in August 2021.
- 3.2 At the beginning of the pandemic, work with the CLTs stalled while priorities shifted for all involved and new ways of working were established.
- 3.2 Alongside the support being offered to existing CLTs, a priority for this year will be to identify other existing community groups in the Borough and offer the support of Locality to establish new housing led groups to meet local housing needs.

4. Eastern Communities Homes

- 4.1 When a community led housing group is being created and indeed, throughout the development process, it is usual that a group would have to go to several different organisations to receive help and support. Great Yarmouth, by using Locality to provide specialist advice and support limit this requirement.
- 4.2 However, recognising a need for additional capacity to support such groups, Cambridgeshire ACRE led the development of a bid to MHCLG's CLH Enabler Hub Grant Fund for 2020/21 for the 6 counties in the eastern region to fund the creation of a hub (Eastern Communities Homes) to centralise this support and knowledge.
- 4.2 Each local authority has been asked to make a small contribution (£3,000) to ensure the hub can set up and operate for the first two years, after this it is expected that the hub will be self-financing.

The Hub's offer is to;

- Raise awareness and training for local authorities, their local council and communities.
- Share expertise and experience of community led housing across all 50 councils and their local councils and communities.
- Support the development of planning and housing policy to enable community led housing.
- Deliver technical advice and support to local councils and communities from inception to completion of community led housing.

Great Yarmouth has supported this initiative using the Community Housing Fund.

5. Risk Implications

Currently the only risk to the fund would be a request from Government to repay unspent funds.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Legal implications have been considered and NP Law consulted on the agreement with Locality and all paperwork associated with the Community Housing Fund Policy and the loan funding.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The remaining funds total £515,986.66, the Locality contract costs will be met from this fund leaving a total of £478,086.66 for set up grant's and loans. The budget will recycle as loans repay.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The pandemic caused an initial slow-down in activity until new ways of working were established, two of the CLT's remain inactive during restrictions.
- 8.2 Both active CLT's have potential opportunities they are considering with Great Yarmouth CLT having a housing association on board to assist with delivery.
- 8.3 Support is being provided by Great Yarmouth for the Eastern Communities Homes Hub.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 Community Housing Fund Policy.

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Existing Council Policies:	Community Housing Fund Policy
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	Discussed in report
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Discussed in report
Risk Implications:	Discussed in report

Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	None
Crime & Disorder:	None
Every Child Matters:	None