



Heart of Wessex Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday 26th July 2016

Minutes

SSDC Offices, Churchfields, Wincanton, Somerset BA9 9AG

Present: Michael Mounde (MM) (Chairman), Simon Cullum (SC), Sue Place (SP), Lizzy Ralph (LR), Susan Jonas (SJ), Bridget Wayman (BW), Tim Carroll (TC), Helen Rutter (HR) (Advisor), Peter Wheelhouse (PW) (Advisor)

In attendance: Ali Morgan (AM) – Wiltshire Council, Emma Curtis (EC) – Programme Officer

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** MM welcomed everyone to the meeting including for the first time Tim Carroll (TC) Chairman of the Board of Trustees to Wincanton Community Venture and Bridget Wayman (BW) from Wiltshire Council. All introduced themselves. MM gave an update on SDB's absence stating that she had been signed off for a further three weeks and thanked EC and SP for continuing to run the programme smoothly.

1a. Apologies: Sarah Dyke-Bracher (SDB), Jenny Pitcher (JP), Dan Templar (DT), Naomi Kimber (NK), Andy Fussell (AF) and Martin Woods (MW).

1b. Declarations of Interest: None received.

1c. Minutes of 25th May 2016 Executive Committee meeting: Approved and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

1d. Matters Arising: No matters arising

2. Project Applications

2a. Project. WF, ME & JWF, GE Snell: The Trough Farm Shop (Project Ref: 102344) Project Cost: £241,770 Grant Intervention: 40% Grant Requested: £96,708

Introduction. MM commented that this was a straightforward application and had received a clear recommendation from the Appraiser. The Quality Check (QC) on the Appraisal had been completed and passed. Thanks were given to the Appraiser and Quality Checker for completing the work in a timely fashion. MM commented that all should be aware of any possible Brexit implications and reminded those present that the outcome of the decision made at the meeting could not be given to the applicant until current restrictions were lifted.

Discussion. The following points were made during discussion:

- **TC** - Commented that he knew the applicant from past planning applications and that it was clear he was building on past achievements. It was clear what the applicant wanted to achieve and the application should be supported.
- **SP** - A query regarding the amount of projected salaries as the FA stated a wage bill of £43,300 which differed from figures show in other documentation. This was reviewed and discussed. Felt it was a good coherent application and a good plan for the future. Concern raised about a local farm shop not being mentioned as a potential competitor.

- **BW** – Regarding the planning permission for the retirement bungalows, BW questioned how the bungalows would be managed. Concern was expressed regarding a farm shop at the other end of the village which could potentially be driven out of business. This was discussed and it was felt that the proposed shop would pick up a different catchment area.
- **LR** – Really liked the project and its synergy with the creation of the new bungalows. Felt the applicant was very competent with a proven track record and presented well at the LAG Forum.
- **SJ** – Concern was raised that the focus of the application was based on meat and as a vegetarian questioned whether vegetarians would visit the shop as it needs a more horticultural element.
- **SC** – Was also confused by the projected salaries with the differing figures found in the FA and Annexes and also felt that the report was somewhat misleading with a general air of optimism. Questioned where local people would want the jobs provided. Felt the application was sloppy with optimistic sales figures. Would however support the application.
- **AM** – Agreed with the previous comments on the salary figure discrepancies and optimistic projection figures. . AM also described a query that she had raised by email to EC shortly before the meeting: The applicant had replied 'yes' to question 6b on the FA form, indicating that other public funding had been received, but this other funding was not included in Question 6C. EC provide verbal assurance that this was likely to be just a misunderstanding of Q6 and EC did not believe there was any other public funding. AM advised that this discrepancy needs to be cleared up with formal confirmation of the situation in writing from the applicant. . It is important that questions like these are queried and cleared up by the project sponsor and appraiser before applications come to the decision panel, in order to provide panel members with all the information they need to come to a decision.
- **EC** and **AM** felt it may be a good idea in future to provide the appraiser and sponsor questions and responses to LAG Executive members with the FA.
- **PW** – Agreed with all previous comments and felt that the project would add value as well as being diversification in action which is what the programme should be supporting.
- **MM** – Felt there was an air of optimism, had presented well at the LAG Forum and had given a reasonably good timescale. Hoped that Brexit would not have major implications.

Decision. Voting members voted six in favour, with none against and no abstentions with the two standard conditions along with any conditions on the planning application restated. MM signed the LEADER FA Appraisal Form 009 to confirm approval on behalf of the LAG.

At this point it was reiterated that due to purdah restrictions no approval or rejection of applications should be communicated whatsoever. At present there was no update from DEFRA on timescales and when the restrictions may be lifted. It was however agreed that preparation of the contract could take place so it would be ready to send once restrictions were lifted. AM commented that it was very important that no communication takes place as Wiltshire Council as Accountable Body could be liable. SC requested a copy of the email from Ian Hague with guidance; EC confirmed she would circulate.

3. Update from RPA/DEFRA: MM noted that no report had been received. AM stated that Ian Hague had asked her to comment that it was unlikely that a representative from the RPA would be present at any future meetings.

4. Update from the Accountable Body:

MM commented that another meeting had taken place between Wiltshire Council, HoW and Wincanton Community Venture on 6th July and he felt that the air was being cleared. AM commented that progress was being made. AM reported she was meeting with EC and SP on Thursday to discuss LAG reports in order to ensure that all LAG's were reporting in a similar way and that all reports and information were available prior to meetings.

AM stressed how important it is that LAG Executive members receive a full set of reports from the LAG well in advance of meetings. This is to enable members to come to meetings fully informed and able to comment and constructively question all aspects of programme delivery and progress; so that members can play their full role overseeing and guiding programme delivery, as well as deciding on individual applications.

5. **Programme Update:** In SDB's absence MM had distributed a report prior to the meeting – Annex A, which he then ran through. PW mentioned that an Outline Application from the Cheese and Grain would shortly be submitted to HoW. A discussion took place regarding the restrictions imposed by the purdah process and the impact it may have on holding back the programme with general frustrations being aired.

AM informed the LAG that they may wish to consider changing the OA approval process whilst the purdah restrictions continued, as currently the HoW an OA appraisal and decision process involving the LAG Forum. Under current rules this would count as a formal decision that should not be communicated to applicants, so preventing applicants from being invited to submit Full Applications. The LAG executive members voted unanimously that if restrictions were still in place leading up to the LAG Forum in September then the Programme Manager should be given the authority to decide on OA's and whether they progress to FA's (this counts as standard process rather than a formal decision). It was also agreed that the Programme staff would upload all the OA documents to the Executive Members section of the website. Executive members were encouraged to review these OAs and send any comments they may have to the Programme staff (copying to other LAG Executive members). This system is being used by other LAG's during this time.

A question was raised about whether the LAG Forum could go ahead if purdah restrictions were still in place, and whether this could be publicised on the website. AM agreed to check on this.

MM stated that EC needed programme management support during SDB's continued absence. It was agreed that other Programme Managers from neighbouring LAG's may be approached for assistance if SDB is still absent.

6. **Programme Running Cost & Animation (RCA):** AM confirmed that the third RCA claim had been paid to WCV and asked that the next claim not be sent to WC until requested to be submitted. EC confirmed that Claim 4 was in the process of being compiled but would not be submitted now until requested by WC.

7. **Items requested by members:** None requested.

8. **Any Other Business:** None

9. **Date of the next meeting:** Wednesday 28th September at 6.30pm, Churchfields, Wincanton, BA9 9AG

The Chairman thanked all for attending, and also South Somerset District Council for the use of the room and the excellent coffee. He closed the meeting at 19:40.

Approved as a correct record:

Signed:

Date:

LAG Executive Chairman



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