

CHAIR'S REPORT.

Today we are celebrating our first year as a legally incorporated Community Benefit Society – run entirely by volunteers.

After a year that certainly has been challenging I will re-cap on what has been happening.

Housing needs survey.

We engaged Arc4 to do a housing needs survey town wide. It was run over several weeks during lockdown. Every household received a questionnaire regarding their housing situation and what they thought was needed to help. Over those weeks I had some very interesting conversations with friends, work colleagues, people over the phone and on social media. We have young couples living with one set parents some with children, others saving to get a foothold in the housing market, we have family members living in sheds in gardens or garages and using these as additional bedroom space because they are not able to secure accommodation from the local housing provider, to not being able to afford private rent or a mortgage.

These people are already part of our community they are registered with our GP's, dentist, may have children in local schools and work in our town. They are not increasing the towns population but are already par of it.

Swale Borough Council are now looking at their Housing Allocation Policy, this is out for consultation and I would urge all members to participate. The FCLT will be commenting on it as well as the Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Local Plan.

Social Media

We have become much more active on Social Media and I would like to thank Louise Bareham for all her effort regarding this. There have been some very interesting and thought-provoking posts covered.

We also have a Faversham Housing Noticeboard which was launched over the Summer, this is attracting more members and advertises different rented accommodation available and also if you are looking for rented accommodation you can also post that on there.

Membership

Our own membership has continued to grow and part of this is due to the activity on Social media and we are just tipping over 200 members.

Sites

Shortly after last years' meeting, we were approached by a local landowner, who has offered the trust approximately 2acres of land. At the moment in time is highly confidential. We are working on a pre-application with an architect for a mix of sustainable housing with a green space such as a community orchard and we are all very excited by this. Updates will follow once we are in a good position. We are also looking at other sites around Faversham and I am hoping to be meeting with KCC and SBC in the future.

SBC have also been extremely supportive providing the trust with funding, we have also received advice from Lorraine Hart a Community Trust enabler. Also, the trustees have attended events organised by Kent led Housing and more recently webinars on a variety of useful subjects.

We are continuing to engage with Local Councillors.

We hope to develop relationships with regional and national developers

We continue to identify sources of funding

This all takes time and effort and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our board of trustees. We are on a steep learning curve but we remain determined with our vision to deliver the right housing solutions and other amenities that will grow our community and economy but also enhance our environment.

Claire Martin Chair