

Meeting Summary

Purpose:

The meeting focused on discussing which of two potential housing associations, Hastoe Housing Association or English Rural Housing Association, should be recommended to the Parish Council to progress the Rural Affordable Housing Project

Key Discussion Points

- **Initial Tendering Process:** Whilst a previous tender had been sent to four or five housing associations to tender, feedback from RCCE is that there are only two associations (Hastoe and English Rural) who would be interested in pursuing a development on the scale envisaged, most associations have a minimum size of around 25 or more. Some disappointment was expressed that a wider choice is not available, but it was agreed that this is the reality to be dealt with.
- **Concerns with Hastoe:** Concerns were raised about Hastoe's historical reputation as a landlord and a poorly conceived and delivered previous presentation, both resulting in a negative perception within the village.
- **Scale of Business:** It was noted that the scale of the Hastoe business, both overall and in the local area is significantly larger than English Rural.
- **Government Gradings:** Hastoe received better or more complete gradings on consumer, governance, and viability standards, whereas English Rural was not graded on the consumer standard (possibly as a result of its smaller scale)
- **Overall Assessment:** Despite the reservations expressed the consensus was that Hastoe is the most appropriate of the two options because of its existing, larger presence in the Braintree and Essex areas, and the fact that they are a "known entity" in the village.
- **Recommendation:** It was concluded that Hastoe be recommended to the Parish Council as the developer for the Rural Affordable Housing Project, with the caveat that clear terms of reference must be set to address past issues and ensure all concerns are dealt with during the pre-planning stage. It was also noted that Hastoe will need to take concerted action to improve their engagement with the village during this process.