**Rural Housing needs project update**

**3 March 2025**

Video calls attended by Prakash and Andrew, along with Fiona from Community First Oxfordshire, have been held with two of the organisations detailed in the November update to the Parish Council. These are Hastoe Housings and Soha Housing, below is a recap of these organisations.

Hastoe are a specialist provider of rural housing and have a good reputation in working with communities. They manage stock across the South of England. They currently only have limited stock in Oxfordshire but are keen to extend their work further into the County. Their advantage comes from their extensive experience of delivering rural exception sites but are based remotely with the regional office in Essex. Housing Management would be carried out on a local basis as they employ staff within the area of the development to manage the homes once built. Hastoe have been a key contributor to the rural housing enabling service being established in Oxfordshire and are part of the steering group.

Soha are a locally based housing association with their office in Didcot and have stock across Oxfordshire. Community First Oxfordshire have worked very closely with them as partners with Community Land Trusts, most recently at Hook Norton where they have taken on the affordable housing at the Hook Norton Community Land Trust scheme. They have not recently developed many rural exception sites but are experienced in small developments and engaging with communities. They are also on the Oxfordshire rural housing enabling steering group.

**Recommendation of next step**

Both housing providers came across well in the discussions and would be capable of delivery of this project. After reviewing the merits of both we recommend selecting Hastoe, due to their particular expertise in delivering Rural Exception Site, to move forward to a presentation and discussion with the full council.

Due to staff changes within Hastoe we aim to schedule this for June/July.