**Proposed Development for Affordable and Social Housing**

**Cranhill Road Car Park and Cemetery Lane**

Below are questions posed by Street Parish Council along with the responses received from Mendip District Council on 28th January 2021.

1.           **Why was Aster the only company considered for the development? I have seen your previous email in response to this question. That tells us why Aster is a good choice but does not answer the question as to why no other companies were invited into the process.**

*The Programme was set up to address an urgent housing need. It was considered vital to identify a single partner for the first tranche of delivery in order to make progress at pace.  As Aster were already a strategic partner with a solid track record of delivery, and with ownership of properties adjacent to a number of our sites, it was logical that we would discuss our objectives with them in the first instance.*

*We were also very aware that the time-scale for delivery and our ability to deliver our Corporate Priorities would be shortened by unitary authority considerations. At the time it was anticipated that a shadow authority could have been in place by March 2021, although that urgency has receded a little in recent months.  We were also becoming increasingly aware that the economic and social impacts of Covid-19 would impact on the already high levels of housing need in the district. Had we known then about the devasting second wave, we would have wanted to move even faster to address this challenge.*

*Potential sites in subsequent tranches are being discussed with a variety of RP partners, some on an exclusive basis and others in a competitive situation. All potential opportunities are valued independently to ensure best value is being achieved.*

2**.           Why were Street Parish Council not informed of the proposed action by MDC until so late in the process? This makes it extremely difficult to represent the interests of the residents of Street & to canvass their opinions in a systematic way.**

*On reflection, we should have engaged with the Parish Council earlier.  We would add though that the Cabinet paper in November 2020 was seeking agreement to enter into contracts with Aster as an early key milestone in the programme, and we always intended to ensure thorough stakeholder engagement, including with Parish and Town Councils, once that agreement had been secured.  The extended pre-application consultation has provided the opportunity for wider engagement and further consultation will occur when a planning application is submitted by Aster.*

*The two sites have been under consideration by the Council for some time.  Cemetery Lane was awarded government Land Release Funding in 2018 in recognition of its housing development potential and this was in the public domain. I am aware that the housing potential for the Cranhill Road site has previously been discussed at a public meeting, albeit some time ago.*

3.           **Will the social housing to be built be for the residents of Street or will residents of Street have priority, or will people be brought in from outside as I understand has happened in the past? Do Street Parish Council or any other Street-based organisation have any say in allocation of the housing?**

*Allocation of the housing will be determined through the planning process via a S106 agreement. The Council has a statutory duty to consider all housing needs in the District but in reality, the majority of affordable housing is allocated to local residents.*

4**.           Will the money that MDC is making from the sale of the sites be used for the benefit of Street & its residents?**

*The Leader of the Council has made a commitment to reinvesting capital receipts in more affordable and social housing within the district.*

5**.           Has the Cemetery Lane site been tested for phosphates?**

*A ground investigation has been undertaken. Natural England, as a statutory consultee on all planning applications, prescribes that phosphate mitigation is required to deal with phosphates generated by occupants of a development, not any pre-existing components of the soil.*

6**.           Is there any plan in place for future burial sites to replace the one on Cemetery Lane?**

*The Council is currently producing a Bereavement Strategy for the whole District but this work is likely to be delayed by resources being diverted to assist on the Covid vaccination programme. It is estimated that there is at least 11 years remaining capacity at Cemetery Lane based on recent trends.*

7.           **What will be the impact of the loss of parking revenue from Cranhill Road Car Park on future council tax increases?**

*The impact on revenue is likely to be minimal as the car park has not been operating at capacity.*