

The Future of CPCA Housing

Member Workshop Wednesday 6th April 9am to 11am Zoom

Summary of key points

The workshop was attended by Members and officers from each local authority plus non- voting members of the CPCA and from the Business Board.

Session One: Common housing challenges for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The meeting split into two randomly selected breakout groups and considered the main housing challenges facing the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area identified at the officer's workshop the preceding week. Members concluded that the key housing challenges for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough included: -

1. Skills – lack of joining up across sectors including MMC and housing retrofit
2. Specialist housing – poorly coordinated at a strategic level and missed opportunities to meet housing needs
3. Infrastructure – input necessary to unlock schemes, delaying the delivery of homes in some cases and putting pressure on finite amounts of S106
4. Viability of development – conflicting priorities of different stakeholders and preventing delivery of new homes
5. Funding – no centralised bidding to bring in additional resources from government, HE or private sector

Session Two: The future roles of the CPCA on housing

The meeting separated into the same breakout groups and there was consensus on there being strategic, financial, and coordinating roles for the CPCA. This included bringing in additional government and private sector funding and in convening partners and stakeholders to overcome blockages on major housing schemes by addressing viability issues. These roles should be seen as adding value to and supporting the housing functions of individual housing authorities where the responsibility for maintaining and delivering housing clearly sat. The level of support for the CPCA carrying out the three roles in future was predicated on a need for greater confidence and trust in how the CPCA transformation programme aligns its thematic functions, how they interface with local authorities and other partners, and the cohesion of the political support for them.

It was agreed that the CPCA had an ongoing role in ensuring the remaining housing grant funding was monitored effectively and that it required a continuity of expertise in how that was managed, but also that it could be absorbed into a wider programme monitoring and/or place team. It was also suggested that the function could be carried out directly by a partner agency such as one of the local authorities. There was also support for a continuation of the Community Housing Trust programme and for the CPCA to have a coordinating and monitoring role.

Any future housing role should sit alongside the other strategic functions of the CPCA and would need to be joined up with the skills agenda, viability issues, transport, the economy and delivering on climate change priorities. Housing could sit inside a wider directorate of place and would form an integral part of the strategic approach of the CPCA rather than as a separate workstream.

Housing could form part of a wider role of the CPCA, and three roles could be foreseen:

1. Strategic. Where local authorities and other partners require intervention to bring sites forward to deliver affordable housing and other public benefits the CPCA could take on a convening and investing role.
Where partners agree collectively that they wish to innovate and develop new ways of working then the CPCA could support this approach through funding and commissioning work i.e. Modern Methods of Construction.
Specialist housing and difficult to build housing might be another strategic role that the CPCA convened and supported with some funding to ensure that the right type of specialist housing is available to communities in the future.
2. Finance. Linked to its strategic role the CPCA could identify opportunities for bidding and/or securing new sources of funding to deliver the housing ambitions of the CPCA partners. This could be bringing groups of authorities together to bid for funding or helping develop collaborative programmes that attract private sector finance.
3. Coordinating. Some areas that directly impact on the delivery of more housing and zero carbon are poorly coordinated across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough areas and there could be a role for the CPCA in supporting better coordination of skills and the development of increased capacity particularly in relation to retrofit and planning.

Next Steps

It is proposed that this note form the basis of the paper to the CPCA Board in June and that a small group of officers from local authority and other partners support the drafting of that paper.