

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 22 June 2020

Time: 14:00 p.m. to 16:15 p.m.

Venue: Meeting held remotely in accordance with Part 2 regulation 5 of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/392).

Present: Councillor Steve Allen, Councillor David Ambrose-Smith, Councillor Chris Boden (Chairman), Councillor Ryan Fuller, Councillor Roger Hickford, Councillor Mike Sargeant and Councillor Bridget Smith

Apologies: None

80. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No apologies received.

Councillor Boden highlighted that agenda item 2.2 (iii) £100m AHP Scheme Approvals - March Town Centre FAHHA, involved sites that were currently owned by Cambridgeshire County Council but that the application had been made by a third party. He explained that he was a County Councillor, along with Councillors Hickford and Fuller but that this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest and would not prejudice the decision making process.

81. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG – 27 APRIL 2020

In discussing the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020;

- Councillor Sargeant queried progress on the year-end review of the £100 million Housing Programme with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and whether the second tranche of funding had been released. The Director of Housing and Development explained that the review continued and that the Combined Authority still awaited the second tranche of funding. He clarified that a final review meeting had been scheduled for early September 2020 and that there had been some discussions in terms of the programme end date which were still ongoing from the last meeting which he hoped would be resolved at the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and it was agreed that they would be signed by the Chairman when the Combined Authority returned to its offices.

- Councillor Smith requested that the minutes highlighted any comments attributed to her individually for this meeting. The Chairman commented that this was not usual practice but that for the purposes of this meeting the minutes would reflect individual Members comments. The Chairman requested that officers reviewed this position for the Combined Authority Committees and report back on the position to the Committee. **ACTION.**

In discussion of the action log:

- Councillor Sargeant queried why a report had not come to the Committee meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on Culture and Tourism as requested at the last meeting. The Chairman explained that a position statement had been circulated to the Committee separately to the Committee agenda. He explained that it stated clearly that the Skills team were working to produce a Local Recovery Plan that would go to Board in September. He explained that the situation was fluid
- Councillor Smith commented that tourism had been highlighted as an 'orphan area' when the Committees were originally set up but that it was now a critical area as highlighted by the COVID pandemic, and that the role of the Committee in relation to Tourism needed to be reviewed. The Chairman requested that officers review the role of the Committee in relation to Tourism in light of COVID and report back.
ACTION

The remaining actions were noted.

82. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions received.

No formal questions were received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

83. COMBINED AUTHORITY FORWARD PLAN

No comments were made on the Combined Authority Forward Plan.

84. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan was noted.

85. £70 MILLION AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME - CAMBRIDGE CITY

The Committee considered a report on the spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme.

In presenting the report officers clarified that contractors were now back on site with social distancing rules in place. Officers explained that the final three sites in the programme would be going into planning in July 2020 and sales were starting to open up on site.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Sargeant highlighted the need for accessible housing in all housing schemes as homelessness was a big issue nationally. He explained that more than 100 people had been housed in temporary new buildings in Cambridge. The Director of Housing and Development stated that accessibility was a planning authority matter and that this had been highlighted at previous Committee meetings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report on spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme, and the next report will be provided in September 2020.

86. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - HEYLO, ROMAN FIELDS, PASTON

The Committee considered a report that sought £645,000 grant funding from the £100m Affordable Housing programme for 20 additional shared ownership units at Roman Fields, Paston, Peterborough, requested by Heylo Homes.

In presenting the report officers explained that the proposed homes would be 20 additional shared ownership units as part of a development site. The site was currently under development by Keepmoat with 457 new homes in a mix of tenures and bedroom types.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Sargeant commented that the houses were over the 85% figure for national space standards but queried whether this was always the case with schemes that were submitted. The Director of Housing and Development stated that it was rare that a scheme came forward with lower than 85% against the national space standards and that this would be flagged with Members.
- Councillor Sargeant queried whether the homes within the scheme provided additionality and if this was properly displayed and evidenced in the report in relation to local planning figures. The Chairman stated that the additionality was reflected as the intervention of the Combined Authority and that planning was a local planning authority matter. Officers reiterated that they worked closely with district planning officers on schemes. The Chairman requested that the paragraph were additionality is explained in reports going forwards should be highlighted in bold so that it was easy to spot. **ACTION**

- Councillor Fuller stated that the reference to local planning figures was a red herring and a Cambridge centric approach and that procedural discussions in relation to the way in which reports were compiled should be done outside the meeting.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £645,000 (equating to £32,250 per unit) from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 20 additional shared ownership homes at Roman Fields, Paston, Peterborough.

87. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - ALCONBURY WEALD - MAN GPM

The Committee considered a report that sought £4,425,000 of grant funding from the £100m Affordable Housing programme for 94 additional affordable units with a mix of 65 affordable rented and 29 shared ownership, at Alconbury Weald, Alconbury by Man GPM.

In introducing the report officers explained that Man GPM were a for profit organisation that provided housing. Officers explained that their investment model involved exploring ways to deliver new supplies of affordable housing for low cost rents and home ownership and that they would work with Registered Providers using leases to maintain units for a minimum of 10 years.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Smith queried the lease for a minimum of 10 years and whether the homes would then be sold on the open market. She sought clarification that the homes would not go on the open market and would remain as affordable housing in perpetuity. The Chairman stated that he did not like to use the word in perpetuity and assumed that if such a lease was terminated another registered provider would be found. The Director of Housing and Development stated that he was happy to accept that the homes would not be returned to the open market. The Director of Housing and Development to secure clarification and send a post meeting note to members confirming the arrangements with the applicant for the houses to remain as affordable units beyond the initial 10 years. **ACTION**
- Councillor Smith commented that she was aware that some for profit organisations were using the new Local Housing Allowance rates as a basis for setting their affordable rates. She requested further information on the intended rent levels for the scheme and whether they would be pre or post COVID rates. Officers explained that the rates would be in line with Local Housing Allowance rates.

- Councillor Sargeant requested that the Director of Housing and Development circulated further information to the Committee regarding the setting of affordable rent levels and how it worked at a national level.
- Councillor Fuller commented that it would be useful to ascertain the Combined Authorities view on what for profit organisations do with Grant Funding.
- Councillor Allen commented that if the houses were disposed of in the future, who it was disposed to would be his main concern. He explained that he would be comfortable if they went to aspirational tenants but not to commercial landlords.
- Councillor Ambrose Smith highlighted to Members that the rent rates were contained within the exempt appendices to the report.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £4,425,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 94 additional units, with a mix of 65 affordable rented and 29 shared ownership homes at Alconbury Weald, Alconbury.

88. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - MARCH TOWN CENTRE FAHHA

The Committee received a report that sought £3,520,000 of grant funding from the £100m Affordable Housing programme for 90 additional units with a mix of 70 affordable rented and 20 shared ownership, at 3 sites (Queens St, Norwood Road & Hereward Hall) in March Town centre.

The Chairman highlighted that that the Committee had been notified of an error in the confidential appendices for this item and that Start on Site was expected to be in February 2021 and the scheme completed by October 2022.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Sargeant commented that it was a windfall site and that other houses would be for sale and that the viability test was not viable to provide a sufficient level of affordable housing. The Director of Housing and Development commented that all of the units on the sites would be affordable. The Chairman explained that the viability report had been published for Fenland as part of the impending Local Plan and that in large parts of Fenland it had been identified that there was no viability for affordable housing. He commented that this was a very different position than other parts of Cambridgeshire. He commented that there were many developers coming forward that could prove that there was no viability to provide anything for the community and this was a major issue.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £3,520,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 90 additional units, with a mix of 70 affordable rented and 20 shared ownership homes within March Town Centre.

89. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - RAF UPWOOD, EVERA

The Committee received a report that sought £2,720,000 of grant funding from the £100m Affordable Housing programme for 64 additional affordable units with a mix of 32 social rented and 32 shared ownership at Former RAF Upwood, Ramsey Road, Bury, Huntingdonshire.

In introducing the report officers explained that the site had existing outline planning approval and that reserved matters applications were in the process of being submitted. Officers highlighted that the site had been impacted by a number of issues that were affecting the viability and that a viability challenge had been submitted by Evera Homes to reduce the amount of affordable housing to 0% therefore the grant was subject to review.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Smith commented that the application was pushing close to the mark with space standards at only 86%. She commented that the authority should be doing more upfront about this and have a stronger view.
- Councillor Fuller explained that he agreed with Councillor Smith but that for the Combined Authority to take a blanket approach would fail to look at the individual challenges. He clarified that the site had needed redeveloping for years.
- Councillor Sargeant highlighted that the discussion at Committee in September in relation to the Housing Market Assessment and the variability across the authority. He explained that he was struck by the situation in Fenland which he was not aware of. He requested that space standards be included in the report and input was needed from district housing officers in relation to the pressures that they were under.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £2,720,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 64 additional units, with a mix of 32 social rented and 32 shared ownership homes at the Former RAF Upwood site.

90. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - STANGROUND, PETERBOROUGH, CKH

The Committee considered a report that sought £1,260,000 of grant funding from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 28 affordable rented additional units, at Stanground, Peterborough.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £1,260,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 28 affordable rented additional units, at Stanground, Peterborough.

91. £100 MILLION AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme.

In introducing the report the Director of Housing and Development highlighted the appendices included with the report that showed the location of schemes across the Combined Authority Area, a list of all of the approved schemes and a bar chart showing the stages of approvals. He explained that there were 591 Starts on Site to date in total, up from 483 when last reported. He clarified that so far the programme had delivered 89 completed units, seven schemes have completed in some form, with another two schemes due to be completed in the next few months, Covid-19 construction delays permitting . He clarified that there had been one scheme withdrawal in Papworth. He highlighted that so far £47.68 million has been contractually committed, comprising £7.68 million in grants and the full revolving £40 million in loan funding. He clarified that £19.5 million was in the process of being contracted. He explained that in terms of the risks and issues COVID had impacted the programme in terms of progress in relation to builds. He commented that there had been some starts back on site and some programme slippage and that progress was slow and steady. He highlighted that there had been a high level of enquires by developers in relation to affordable housing and a healthy number of schemes coming through the pipeline.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Sargeant commented that most of the affordable housing ended up being shared ownership and that he would like to see more of a mix in the future. He requested that appendix one of the report showed tenure types in future reports. **ACTION.** The Director of Housing and Development commented that currently the unit mix was quite healthy.
- Councillor Sargeant commented that the starts on site for the Combined Authority were still quite low and that he had concerns that 2000 homes would start on site in the next two years. The Director of

Housing and Development commented that there were more projects coming through the pipeline that hadn't been counted in the numbers yet, so starts would pick up and we always expected more starts on site towards the end of the programme.

- Councillor Smith commented that the reporting on the programme was much improved.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the progress of the delivery of the £100m programme.

92. ALLOCATION POLICY £100K HOMES

The Committee received a report asking them to consider and approve the proposed £100K Homes Allocations Policy.

The Chairman highlighted that the Committee had received an email that morning with an update to the report recommendation a) to read 'Approve the principle and structure of the £100K Homes Allocations Policy, noting the removal of local connectivity category d'. He explained that this related to the removal of the local connectivity point being where you were born.

In introducing the report the Director of Commercial explained that the Business Case for £100k homes had been approved earlier in the year and that the development of the allocations policy was the next step in the scheme. She clarified that the policy reflected the high level principles of the criteria and was one of two documents, the second document being a guidance document with a lot more detail on what information would be submitted and how it would be assessed, which would be developed following the approval of the policy.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Smith asked that the report be withdrawn from the agenda as she did not feel that the policy was concise enough and there had been no consultation with local authority officers on it. She commented that she was pleased to see that category D had been removed. She explained that she felt the document was potentially illegal and discriminatory and that she was not prepared to delegate the amendments to officers. She highlighted that there was no detail regarding minimum and maximum incomes and no reference to local housing prices in each area. She also asked whether individual's savings were taken into consideration. She explained that this was an enormous subsidy which she did not have an issue with, however the policy needed to be focused to meet the needs of the local areas. She reiterated that district officers had not been consulted on the criteria and that she had not been consulted as a leader or Board Member and that this was not the time to be taking the policy forward. She also asked for engagement with the Regional Housing Board. The

Chairman clarified that the delegation allowed for minor amendments to the policy and did not provide delegation for approval of the second document. He explained that this was a stand-alone document that would be brought to Committee for approval. Councillor Smith reiterated that there were still too many questions and that she would like to recommend that the report be withdrawn for formal consultation and review.

- Councillor Sergeant explained that he had queried if the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Housing Board had been consulted on the policy but that a response was not forthcoming. He explained that he was a big fan of not reinventing the wheel and that there was already government criteria on low cost home ownership. He also suggested using help to buy agents for managing the process. The Director of Commercial stated that this was a policy many local authorities would already be familiar with and that officers had been working to get the principles approved so that they could then do further engagement and consultation on the detailed guidance that sat behind the policy. She clarified that the scheme would be 100% freehold ownership. Councillor Sergeant commented that there were some local help to buy schemes with no shared ownership element. He confirmed that he supported Councillor Smith's proposal to withdraw the report. He sought further clarification on the definition of a keyworker in the policy. The Director of Commercial stated that the definition would be clearly set out in the guidance document and that they had currently kept the definition broad as they recognised that different local authorities would have different definitions and priorities. Councillor Sergeant explained that he would be happier if the criteria focused on district council area as he was not happy with the definition at the moment. He commented that the intention of £100k homes was that they were near your place of work and where you had family connections. The Chairman commented that this was not a reflection of reality in some parts of the Combined Authority area and that there was a greater degree of diversification.
- Councillor Fuller commented that he agreed with Councillor Smith's proposal to remove the report from the agenda. He stated that the policy currently had unintended consequences and needed to go back to the drawing board. He gave himself as an example as he did not work in his home town and this policy would disadvantage people.
- Councillor Hickford commented that he had concerns in relation to the points system from a young person's perspective. He commented that he knew of young people that had moved out of Cambridgeshire as they could not afford to rent or buy. He explained that there was no history of them living in Cambridgeshire take into account and more guidance was needed.

- Councillor Allen commented that he agreed with Councillor Smith's analysis and that the policy needed to be reviewed alongside the guidance document.

Councillor Smith proposed and was seconded by Councillor Sargeant that the report was withdrawn from the agenda and brought back to the next Committee meeting with an amended policy and guidance document.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Withdraw the report and bring it back to the next Committee meeting with an amended policy and the guidance document which accompanies that policy.

93. CONNECTING CAMBRIDGESHIRE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the progress of the digital infrastructure programme, including a reduction in the overall budget allocation in the light of emerging commercial plans and Government funding decisions for mobile coverage across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In presenting the report officers explained that the report gave a background to the programme and they highlighted a number of points in the report;

- The proposal for two work streams to be brought into the programme; the Keeping everyone connected workstream – post COVID. Officers were currently applying for EU ERDF Funding to support technology grants for small business matched by Combined Authority funding; and the Emerging Technology workstream, with a focus on market towns.
- The budget envelop had been reduced and there was still an issue with mobile connectivity. This had been superseded by the Shared Rural Network Programme hence a reduction in budget,

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Fuller queried what the £250,000 over two years would deliver and asked whether the funding could be focused at a district level. Officers explained that there was scope to look at individual district areas and the workstream was linked to the Business Boards Growth Programme.
- Councillor Sargeant commented that there were two million children that had no access to the internet and queried what opportunities there were to help children with disadvantaged backgrounds. Officers explained that they were aware of this situation and were actively

working with the disadvantaged groups in the Combined Authority area.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress in relation to the provision of digital connectivity infrastructure across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- b) Note the overall digital infrastructure budget allocation reduction from £5.6m to £4.3m, in line with the decision taken by the CPCA board on 3rd June.
- c) Approve the establishment of two additional work streams to support Covid-19 related business recovery activities and the rollout of “Smart” technology to Cambridgeshire market towns, within the reduced budget allocation.
- d) Delegate to the Director of Delivery and Strategy in consultation with the Chair of the Housing and Community Committee the approval of the detailed business plan for the digital infrastructure delivery programme for 2020-2022.

94. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as Monday 14th September 2020.

Chairman