



Combined Authority Board	Agenda Item
26 July 2023	16
Title:	Recommendations from Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee
Committee Date:	12 June 2023
Meeting Link:	Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee 12 June 2023

Agenda Item	Community Homes Support
Recommendations:	The Combined Authority Board is recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discontinue providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of voting members
Purpose:	<p>On 13th March 2023 the Housing and Communities Committee agreed to defer a decision to recommend that the Combined Authority discontinues providing a support service to community homes groups from 31 March 2023 for a three-month period to allow for engagement with local authorities, Eastern Community Homes and community homes groups. Officers were asked to report back to the relevant committee in June 2023 following the engagement process.</p> <p>On 12 June 2023 the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee considered the proposal having taken into consideration the responses received following the consultation. Members were equally divided and the vote was tied, so the matter is referred to Board with a neutral recommendation from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee.</p>



Combined Authority Board	Agenda Item
26 July 2023	16

Title:	Community Homes Support
Report of:	Steve Cox, Interim Executive Director of Place and Connectivity
Lead Member:	Cllr Bridget Smith
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of voting Members

Recommendations:	
A	To discontinue providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023.

1. Purpose	
1.1	On 13 th March 2023 the Housing and Communities Committee agreed to defer a decision to recommend that the Combined Authority discontinues providing a support service to community homes groups from 31 March 2023 for a three-month period to allow for engagement with local authorities, Eastern Community Homes and community homes groups. Officers were asked to report back to the relevant committee in June 2023 following the engagement process.
1.2	On 12 th June 2023 the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee considered the proposal having taken into consideration the responses received following the consultation. Members were equally divided and the vote was tied, so the matter is referred to Board with a neutral recommendation from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee.

2. Proposal	
2.1	To discontinue providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023.

3. Background	
3.1	<p>The Combined Authority's Housing Strategy of September 2018 recognised that delivery of community housing could contribute towards meeting the combined authority's housing objectives.</p> <p>On 27 January 2021 the Combined Authority's Board approved a community homes business case that included the provision of £5,000 community homes start-up grants to support emerging community-led housing groups.</p> <p>On 10 January 2022 the Housing and Communities Committee approved the current Community Homes Strategy and Eastern Community Homes (ECH) were appointed to provide a support service to community homes groups until 31 March 2023. The arrangement excluded providing support to</p>

community homes groups within East Cambridgeshire as these groups are supported directly by officers from East Cambridgeshire District Council.

On 7 October 2022 the Housing and Communities Committee approved a proposal that originated from East Cambridgeshire District Council and allocated funding of £100,000 to provide technical support to established community homes groups across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

On 13th March 2023 the Housing and Communities Committee were advised there had been no take up of the £5,000 start-up grants that were approved in 2001, and no applications had been received for technical support funding from the £100K that was made available from October 2022. The Committee was asked to consider recommending that the Combined Authority discontinues providing support to community homes groups and deferred its decision for a three-month period to allow for engagement with local authorities, Eastern Community Homes and community homes groups. Officers were asked to report back following the engagement process.

On 12th June 2023 the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee considered the proposal having taken into consideration the consultation responses received. Members were equally divided, and the vote was tied.

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee then considered four grant applications for funding from the £100,000 that was made available to provide technical support to established community homes groups. All four applications had been recommended for approval by Eastern Community Homes as part of the out-sourced support arrangement. However, on checking the applications officers noted that three applications did not meet the approved grant assessment criteria and recommended that three of the applications be declined. Members decided to award one grant of £15,000 to Gt. Staughton Community Land Trust in accordance with the officer recommendation.

3.2 The full responses received following the consultation process referred to at 3.1 can be found at Appendix A and a summary of the responses is provided in the table below:

Consultee	Summary of responses
SCDC	Regretfully supports the proposal to discontinue supporting community homes groups.
HDC	Officers recognise the need to review the initiative to support community homes groups due to poor take up.
ECDC	Opposes the proposal to discontinue supporting community homes groups.
FDC	Has no issues with the proposal to discontinue supporting community homes groups.
PCC	Officers neither support nor object to the proposal.
C City C	Officers would not object if the funding was withdrawn.
Eastern Community Homes	Opposes the proposal to discontinue supporting community homes groups.
Waterbeach CLT	Commented that the availability of funding had not been well publicised and recognise that affordable development land is scarce. However, they would like to see a continuation of funding availability.
Gt. Staughton CLT	Opposes the proposal to discontinue grant funding availability.
It Takes a City CLT	Identifies that a problem is caused by a lack of supporting documentation, and a sole reliance on explanation from Eastern Community Homes.

The only constituent Local Housing Authority to oppose the proposal was East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). ECDC provides a support function for community homes groups within East Cambridgeshire that is independent from the out-sourced arrangement provided by the Combined Authority to support groups across the rest of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

4. Appendices

4.1 Appendix A - Consultation responses.

5. Implications

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023 – 2027 approved by the Combined Authority's Board in January 2023 includes budget of £70K per annum for community housing projects until 2025/26. There is a further £50K available for 2023/24 that would cover the cost of renewing the arrangement with ECH for the financial year.
If the proposal to discontinue is approved then remaining funding can be reallocated to alternative priorities by the Combined Authority's Board.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Part 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/251).
- 5.3 Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended by s137 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007), the CPCA is under a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Public Health Implications

- 5.4 N/A

Environmental & Climate Change Implications

- 5.5 N/A

Other Significant Implications

- 5.6 As mentioned at 3.1 the Combined Authority has approved a technical support grant of £15,000 to Gt. Staughton Community Land Trust (GSCLT). This is the only community homes scheme to benefit from Combined Authority community homes grant funding and it was noted that GSCLT may have a requirement for further support as proposals develop.
GSCLT has experience of delivering a scheme of 12 homes in partnership with a housing association and does not require the same level of support as a start-up community homes group. GSCLT could also seek support from the Community Land Trust Network, and Officers from Huntingdonshire District Council have confirmed that general guidance may be available from its Housing or Planning Officers.
- 5.7 [Combined Authority Board Meeting - 27 Jan 2021](#)
[Housing and Communities Committee - 10 Jan 2022](#)
[Housing and Communities Committee - 7 Oct 2022 - REPORT Community Led Housing Support Funding](#)
[Housing and Communities Committee - 13 March 2023 - REPORT Community Housing Support](#)