



Agenda Item No: 2.3

Community Housing Support

To:	Housing and Communities Committee
Meeting Date:	13 March 2023
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Councillor Bridget Smith, Lead Member for Housing and Communities
From:	Steve Cox, Interim Executive Director of Place and Connectivity
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Recommendations:	The Housing and Communities Committee is invited to: a) Discontinue providing a support service to community homes groups from 31 March 2023
Voting arrangements:	A simple majority of all Members present and voting

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for committee members to consider a proposal to renew an arrangement with Eastern Community Homes that provides a support facility to people that express interest in progressing a community housing development scheme.

2 Background

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 On 10 January 2022 the Housing Cttee 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 community homes groups within East Cambridgeshire as these groups are supported directly by officers from East Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 2.4 On 7 October 2022 the Housing Cttee approved a proposal that originated from East Cambridgeshire District Council and allocated funding of £100,000 to support community led housing initiatives across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 2.5 The existing arrangement with ECH ends from 31 March 2023 and new terms have been proposed to enter into a further arrangement until 31 March 2024. The proposed terms include a price reduction from the current cost of £6,000 per quarter to £5,731.50 per quarter, and further detail can be found in the report at Appendix 1.

3 Significant Implications

- 3.1 Quarterly monitoring reports were obtained from ECH during the existing arrangement and a summary report can be found at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Pages 16-18 of the report highlight a very limited take up of the £5,000 start-up grants that were approved by the Housing Cttee in 2021. Only one of three applicants with approved funding applications requested to draw the grant funding, but the company submitting the request bears little association to the applicant so this request has been queried. No grant funding agreements have been completed to date.
- 3.3 The ECH report states that they have received applications for technical support funding from the £100K that was made available by the Housing Cttee in October 2022. On 1st March 2023 these applications had not been submitted to the Combined Authority.
- 3.4 The Context of Delivery section on pages 3 and 4 of the ECH report highlights some of the barriers to progression associated with community led housing projects.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023 – 2027 approved by 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 is subject to approval by Cttee to cover the cost of renewing the arrangement with ECH for the financial year.
- 4.2 If the arrangement with ECH is not renewed then remaining funding can be reallocated to alternative priorities by the Combined Authority's Board.
- 4.3 If the arrangement with ECH was renewed the cost for 2023/24 would be £22,926 + VAT.
- 4.4 No grants have been issued to date so the cost incurred in providing the support service through ECH is not considered to represent good value for money.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Part 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/251).

6 Other Significant Implications

- 6.1 N/A

7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – End of agreement report produced by Eastern Community Homes and proposed terms for a renewed arrangement.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [27 January 2021 Combined Authority Board](#)
- 8.2 [10 January 2022 Housing Cttee](#)
- 8.3 [7 October 2022 Housing Cttee](#)