



<b>Environment &amp; Sustainable Communities Committee</b>		Agenda Item
<b>12 June 2023</b>		<b>6</b>
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	

<b>Recommendations:</b>	
A	To recommend to the Combined Authority's Board that the Combined Authority discontinues providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023.
B	To authorise an extension of the agreement with Eastern Community Homes to provide a support service to community homes groups from 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 to 31 July 2023 on existing terms.
C	
D	

<b>1. Purpose</b>	
1.1	On 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 the Housing and Communities Committee agreed to defer a decision to discontinue 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	Members are asked to reconsider the proposal to discontinue supporting community housing groups following the engagement process.

<b>2. Proposal</b>	
2.1	To recommend to the Combined Authority's Board that the Combined Authority discontinues providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023.
2.2	To authorise an extension of the agreement with Eastern Community Homes to provide a support service to community groups from 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 to 31 July 2023 on existing terms.

### 3. Background

3.1 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.

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.

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 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 support community led housing initiatives across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In 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 Housing and Communities Committee agreed to defer the decision to discontinue 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 following the engagement process.

3.2 A consultation exercise was undertaken to obtain the views of constituent local housing authorities, Eastern Community Homes and community homes groups and the full responses can be found at Appendix A.

A summary of the responses received is provided in the table below:

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Summary of responses</b>
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.	
3.3	The option of continuing to provide a support service and grant funding was considered and rejected in favour of the Combined Authority's Board reallocating resources to alternative priorities.	

## 4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A - Consultation responses.
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## 5. Implications

### Financial Implications

5.1	<p>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.</p> <p>The cost of extending the arrangement with ECH to 31 July would be approximately £2,000 + VAT based on the existing arrangement.</p> <p>If the proposal to discontinue is approved then remaining funding can be reallocated to alternative priorities by the Combined Authority's Board.</p>
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### Legal Implications

6.1	The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Part 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/251).
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### Public Health Implications

7.1	N/A
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### Environmental & Climate Change Implications

8.1	N/A
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### Other Significant Implications

9.1	N/A
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### Background Papers

10.1	<p><a href="#">27 Jan 2021 Board</a></p> <p><a href="#">10 Jan 2022 Cttee</a></p> <p><a href="#">7 Oct 2022 Cttee</a></p> <p><a href="#">13 Mar 2023 Cttee</a></p>
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