

## **COMMUNITY HOMES STRATEGY**

### **Introduction – What is community-led housing?**

Community-led housing (CLH) involves local people playing a leading and lasting role in solving housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities. It can involve building new homes, returning empty homes to use and managing existing homes. These homes are usually either owned by the community or by the residents themselves.

CLH is a different approach to mainstream housing development in terms of development process, ownership of land and the end management of homes. Whilst there are several different approaches to CLH development they all have several things in common. They usually all have qualitative, social benefit and environmental features within a scheme, are not-for profit and are designed to involve residents in addressing the local and/or their own housing needs. CLH schemes are for the benefit of a community, whether that is defined geographically such as with Community Land Trusts (CLTs) or an *intentional* community of like-minded people, such as with cohousing schemes.

The national organisations representing the community-led housing sector have agreed on what constitutes a community-led housing scheme. It can be summarised as follows:

- A requirement that meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the process.
- The community does not necessarily have to initiate and manage the development process, or build the homes themselves, though some choose to do so.
- The local community group or organisation owns, manages or stewards the homes and in a manner of their choosing.
- Includes a requirement that the benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity; e.g. through asset lock.

### **Community Homes, CLT's and the Devolution Deal**

The devolution deal under the section on New Homes and Sustainable Communities stated that to support delivery of the commitments the Combined Authority and Government agreed under section 22.e. to:

*Work with Community Land Trusts to deliver new schemes recognising the benefits these schemes bring to the community.*

And under 22.d.

*Work with local areas' ambitions for new housing settlements. This includes .....a new Community Land Trust Scheme in East Cambridgeshire (Kennett 500 – 1,000 new homes)*

## **CPCA Policy Position and Strategy to Date**

The combined authority's Housing Strategy of September 2018 recognised a need to deliver genuinely affordable housing across the combined authority area. CLTs were referenced as a mechanism that could enable the combined authority to contribute towards meeting housing objectives.

On 27 January 2021 the combined authority board received and approved a full CLT business case. Board also approved the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021 – 2025, which included a budget of £100,000 per annum for 2 years towards project costs including the provision of £5,000 community homes start-up grants and the former £100K Homes project that has now closed. The draft MTFP for 2022-23 includes a revised budget for community housing of £70K per annum until 2025 – 2026 to reflect the closure of the £100K Homes project.

## **Recent and current activity**

Potential community housing groups are recognised in the majority of constituent authority areas in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. There are formally established CLT's in East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City, and Huntingdonshire.

Following the election of Mayor Dr Nik Johnson in May 2021 East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) became aware of a pending resourcing issue with all of the then CPCA Community housing team leaving in August and September 2021 and did not wish to lose impetus on the development of CLTs within their district, so they recruited a dedicated officer to continue this work themselves at local district level.

As the staff from the Community Homes team left the combined authority the CPCA put into place an interim support arrangement with an existing CPCA officer resource from the wider CPCA housing team. CPCA has looked at support options and identified that support services could be provided to an equivalent or better standard externally by Eastern Community Homes (ECH) that specialise in supporting community homes groups across eastern England. This also has the benefit of being an independent external supplier for purposes of impartiality and transparency.

Authority has been obtained to appoint ECH to provide support to Community Homes groups across the combined authority's area (excluding ECDC who still intend to offer direct support) from November 2022 to April 2023.

## **Objectives and Activities**

Eastern Community Homes are to provide support services to community groups independently from the Combined Authority.

Technical support shall be provided by an accredited community-led housing advisor to community groups from project inception to completion and typical activities shall include:

- Advising groups on establishing themselves as an appropriate legal entity.
- Promoting the community housing start-up grant of £5,000 per group available through, and administered by, the Combined Authority.
- Supporting groups to obtain further grant/loan funding to deliver community housing schemes.
- Assisting with the development and delivery of community engagement strategies.

- Providing independent informal guidance, or access to professional advice relating to planning matters and partnership building.
- Providing advice on occupation and management of properties.

The agreed objectives of the support services to be provided by ECH are summarised in the table below:

| <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Actions</b>  | <b>Outputs</b>  | <b>Outcomes</b>   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Work with existing portfolio of 13 community-led housing groups and identify delivery priorities | Contact all existing community-led housing groups within the Combined Authority's portfolio.                                  | Contact made with all groups to establish relationship and build on the work already done.  | Existing groups are reassured that high quality advice and support remains available.   |
|  | Assess each group's needs and devise plan of action to support.   | Identify the number of groups requiring support at each stage of the Community-Led Housing process (Group, Site, Plan, Build, Live).                  | Groups receive appropriate support relative to the stage of their project.  |
|  | Sign-up groups to Eastern Community Homes.  | Support given to groups in priority order to ensure continued development of community-led housing schemes.   | Community-Led Housing Advisor is able to prioritise workload to ensure group receive the support they need at the point they need it. |
|  | Deliver identified support.   | Quarterly Report made to Combined Authority on support provided on its behalf to existing groups.   | Combined Authority is able to report on how its support for community-led housing in contributing to meeting its housing agenda.      |
| Identify and support new community-led housing groups within the Combined Authority area         | Promote community-led housing as a concept to communities so they understand how they might step forward to lead development. | Online webinar delivered to local councils and community groups within Combined Authority area to introduce them to concept of community-led housing. | New and potential CLH groups have an improved understanding of how to deliver their projects.   |

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|  | Sign-up groups to Eastern Community Homes.   | General advice and support provided  | CLH groups are supported throughout their community-led housing journey and able to progress their projects right through to 'live' stage. |
|  | Advise groups on how to progress their community-led housing project.  | Technical advice provided to groups.   | Local authorities see an increase in community-led housing development in their Districts.   |
|  | Signpost groups to relevant technical advice including legal incorporation, business planning and viability assessments. | Links made to local authority officers and members.  |  |
|  | Assist groups in accessing funding to support their project.   | Quarterly Report made to Combined Authority on support provided on its behalf to new groups. |  |
|  | Facilitate discussions with relevant parties e.g. local authorities, developments, registered providers.                 |  |  |

### **Monitoring and Review**

The out-sourcing arrangement with ECH is to be controlled by a memorandum of understanding and monitored regularly by the Housing team with reports issued by ECH each quarter and at financial year end. The overall performance of ECH and the requirement for continued support to community groups shall be reviewed at 2022 – 2023 financial year end.

### **Grant Application Process**

Community Groups interested in applying for a community homes start-up grant for up to £5,000 should contact Eastern Community Homes for initial guidance and support. A grant application can then be submitted to the Housing team and an example of an application form can be found at Annex A.

The combined authority will require a commitment for groups to form a legally incorporated organisation if they have not already done so, and funding will only be released when this status is achieved. This condition applies to ensure that funding is spent responsibly and for intended purposes.

Some community homes groups are likely to be in their infancy and may not have determined their preferred legal status when applying for a start-up grant. This presents a 'chicken and egg' complication that has been considered in detail by the combined authority.

In order to alleviate any burden to community housing projects the costs of legal incorporation are included as eligible expenditure that can be incurred from the date grants are approved by the Housing and Communities Committee. Therefore, a representative of a community housing group that is not yet incorporated can still apply for a grant. The group may then meet its own costs of legal incorporation, and these costs may be recoverable from grant funding that is paid to the group at a later stage when it becomes legally incorporated.

### **Strategic Direction**

The CPCA will be considering its wider Housing strategy in the context of updating Mayoral priorities, organisational objectives and the existing affordable housing programme coming to an end in March 2022.

As part of that new housing principles are being considered by the combined authority as part of a future strategy evolution to support housing in future years .

It is envisaged that there will be an ongoing focus on supporting community groups to deliver affordable housing, but with revised expectations on outputs and governance. Supported groups shall be community-led and focused on the greatest affordable housing challenges in their location as central objectives.

Support for community homes is already part of the existing housing strategy and this community homes strategy is likely to continue to be a significant part of the wider future CPCA Housing strategy for 2022 and beyond.

Annex A – Example Application Form.

Annex A

## **Application Form**

### **Community Homes Start-Up Grant Funding**

The community homes start-up grant of up to £5,000 is intended to assist with the initial stages of community housing projects. Funding can be used to contribute towards professional fees and technical costs associated with legal incorporation, developing business plans, and costs associated with preliminary investigations of potential development sites.

The Combined Authority has appointed Eastern Community Homes to provide support to community housing groups across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough except for proposals within East Cambridgeshire that are to be supported by East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Community groups interested in applying for a start-up grant should seek support from Eastern Community Homes who can provide guidance through the application process.

Eastern Community Homes can be contacted by the following means:

Telephone: 01353 860850

Email: [enquiries@easterncommunityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@easterncommunityhomes.com)

Post: Eastern Community Homes, c/o Cambridgeshire ACRE, e-space North, 181 Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 1RA.

To be eligible for a set-up grant a community-based organisation should meet the following criteria:

1. Applicants must demonstrate a clear intention to form an independent group that is legally recognised, and funding may only be released to legally incorporated organisations. Further detail on this can be found in the Community Homes Strategy.
2. The applicant group must be representative of the community, with an open democratic membership structure.
3. The applicant group must have clear objectives directed towards serving their local community.
4. Any assets that are to be retained by the CLT in the long-term are expected to be permanently affordable for local people on local wages.
5. The organisation must intend to embark on meaningful public engagement and demonstrate their proposals have general community support.

Any available supporting documentation such as a vision or mission statement, evidence of need, letters of support, etc, will assist the application process.

Applications received may then be submitted to the Combined Authority for processing where they may then be presented to the Housing & Communities Committee for a final decision.

If a grant application is approved, then funding will only be released on completion of a formal grant agreement between the Combined Authority and the applicant.

Completed applications are to be submitted by email to: [housing@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk](mailto:housing@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)



**ABOUT THE PROJECT**

LOCATION

PARISH COUNCIL

DOES A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
EXIST?

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR PROJECT**

Please specify the number and type(s) of affordable community homes your organisation is looking to deliver.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**

Please describe why the project is necessary and provide any supporting documentation, e.g., the results of a housing needs survey.



**INITIAL SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES**

Please indicate your objectives for the first six months following the award of a funding allocation.

**MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES**

Please indicate your objectives from the first six months until a period of three years following the award of a funding allocation.

**FUNDING REQUIRED**

Please state the amount of funding required and describe the anticipated items of expenditure.

**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE OPPORTUNITIES**

Please advise if any potential development sites have been identified; and if so, provide ownership, occupier and current site use details.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**ACTIVITIES**

Please provide details of any previous or proposed activity that demonstrates active engagement with the local community.

**LOCAL SUPPORT**

Please provide detail to demonstrate how the proposal is supported by the general local community, e.g., expressions of support from an external body such as a Parish Council.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please list additional documents submitted as part of this application.

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| Please add any further relevant information in support of this application. |
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| <b><u>DECLARATION</u></b>   |  |
| I confirm that all information provided in support of this application is accurate and correct. |  |
| Name  |  |
| Signature   |  |
| Date  |  |
| Position  |  |

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