

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 14 September 2020

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

95. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No apologies received. Members noted that Mayor James Palmer was in attendance at the meeting.

96. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG – 22 JUNE 2020

In discussing the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020;

- The Chairman highlighted minute 81 in relation to attributing comments in the minutes to specific Councillors. He explained that he had raised this with the Monitoring Officer and the Monitoring Officers would be in contact with Democratic Services in relation to determine the Combined Authorities decision as to how minutes were written in the future. He clarified that the minutes for this meeting would attribute comments to Councillors. Councillor Smith welcomed the comments and requested that the Committee continued with this approach for the foreseeable future.

In matters arising from the minutes;

- The Chairman highlighted that a meeting had taken place with the Minister for Housing Communities and Local Government (DCLG) but that this had only take place in the last week and therefore there had been no opportunity to provide an update report on the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme to the Committee. He stated that the Director of Housing and Development would give a verbal update on the position. The Director of Housing and Development explained that the meeting with DCLG had been positive. He stated that as there was now a new Minister in post they needed to be brought up to speed on the position so the Combined Authority (CA) anticipated

that they would hear back on the outcome of the discussions within 4-6 weeks. The Committee would then be updated in November regarding the position of the funding allocation. He explained that he was unable to say anything further at this stage until formal feedback from the meeting was given. He clarified that he would circulate the formal feedback to the Committee when it had been received. Councillor Sargeant stated that in the correspondence of 6 June there had been no indication at all that this would be the final review meeting. He queried whether the minutes were accurate. The Chairman stated that it was clear that a review would be taking place.

- Councillor Sargeant expressed his concerns that an update on the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme had not been scheduled at the meeting. He stated that it was essential that Members of the Committee were kept up to date even if there were no scheme approvals. He stated that if Mere Fen did not go ahead then this would knock off 540 starts on delivery of the programme and that it was vital that this was considered in a timely manner. He stated that potentially this was an emergency situation and that if it was a sensitive issue then a private conversation should be had with Committee Members. The Chairman stated that a final determination had not been made and without this information there was no further update. He explained that he hoped they would have the information by the November meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 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.

In reviewing the action log:

- The Chairman clarified that action point 81 in relation to the review of the role of the Committee in relation to Tourism had been scheduled for the January meeting. Councillor Smith stated that the tourism industry was in absolute crisis and that this was an emergency situation and January was too late. The Chairman highlighted that there were many individual businesses in crisis. He stated that Tourism formed part of the recovery work from COVID, that was being commissioned by the Combined Authority as a whole and that there was no need to initiate a separate review. He stated that there was a large number of items on the November Committee agenda and that it would be beneficial for the Committee to review the position following the end of the furlough scheme.
- The Chairman highlighted that minute action 86 in relation to Roman Fields Paston had been completed as a note had been circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting. Councillor Sargeant stated that he did not feel that the issue of additionality had been dealt with. He explained that he had raised this back in September 2018 and

stressed that there was a need to have a method in terms of proving additionality. He stated that MCLG had cast doubts as to whether all of the CA schemes provided additionality especially Mere Fen in Northstowe. He explained that Members needed this information so that they could make proper judgements. The Chairman stated that it was vital the CA continued to be transparent in its decision making and that it was appropriate for all understand the definition of additionality. The Chairman stated that officers would circulate the definition to all Members of the CA **ACTION** and clarified that additionality calculations would be spelt out clearly in future reports.
ACTION

- The Chairman stated that minute action 87 in relation to the £100M AHP Scheme Approvals – Alconbury Weald Man GPM had been missed off the action log. He explained that the action sought clarification from the Director of Housing and Development confirming the arrangements with the applicant for the houses to remain as affordable units beyond the initial 10 years. He stated that this action would be covered at the next meeting in November.**ACTION**

97. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions received.

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

98. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan was noted.

99. COMBINED AUTHORITY FORWARD PLAN

No comments were made on the Combined Authority Forward Plan.

100. COMMUNITY LAND TRUST SET-UP GRANT

The Committee considered a report that outlined the proposed Community Land Trust (CLT) set up grant and approve the criterial and application form.

Introducing the report the Director Commercial explained that the first step to enabling communities to set up as a CLT would be to make a grant available to them that would assist to relieve the burden of some of the set up costs associated with becoming a CLT. She explained that the report proposed that the CA provided a grant of up to £5,000 that would facilitate incorporation

Discussing the report;

- Councillor Sargeant queried what incorporation meant and if was a legally defined end point? The Director Commercial stated that the definition was a legally incorporate entity, typically a community benefits society or a charity.
- Councillor Sargeant queried whether the grant was just for homes as this was not clear on the form. The Director Commercial clarified that the grant would just be for homes and that the form would be updated to reflect this. **ACTION**
- Councillor Smith queried why the grant was for £5,000 and what research had been carried out to reach this figure and whether it was going to be enough. She also queried how much engagement there had been with existing advisory bodies. The Director Commercial stated that £5,000 was an amount that was reflected nationally. She explained that the CA had started to work with Cambridgeshire ACRE and were hoping to bring an update to the November Committee.
- Councillor Smith sought clarity on what the full business case would entail and what monitoring would be carried out, as she stated that housing needs surveys were a lot of work. The Director Commercial stated that Business Cases would be developed when the CLTs had been incorporated and the CA would look at what intervention could be put in place. In terms of monitoring the CLTs would be required to provide the relevant invoices. She stated that in terms of housing needs surveys she would need to review this and come back to Members as the may not be a need to take a traditional approach. **ACTION**
- Councillor Ambrose-Smith expressed concern that the CLT grants were only for homes. He explained that other CLTs had been set up that did not relate to housing and questioned what would happen to them in the future. The Director of Commercial stated that CLTs would need an element of housing so this could be open space or renewable energy with an element of housing.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the grant criteria and application form as set out in Appendix 1 subject to the following change requested by the Committee:
 - i. Clarification on the application form that the grant is for housing only.

101. ALLOCATIONS POLICY - £100K HOMES

The Committee received a report which outlined and sought approval for the proposed £100k Homes Allocation Policy and Guidance document.

Introducing the report the Director Commercial explained that the Allocations Policy and Guidance Document set out the eligibility criteria for £100K Homes, and the process by which applicants would be prioritised to purchase a £100K Home. She highlighted that the Policy aimed to prioritise those with strong local connections to the area in which each £100K Home came forward. She clarified that employment, and particularly key worker status, in the local area was a key consideration under the Allocations Policy. She stated that other local connections criteria include: current or previous residency and/or close relatives living in the relevant area.

Councillor Hickford proposed an amendment to the Policy in relation to the income criteria. He proposed that it was reduced from £80k to £50k. He explained that those with a low income were more restricted so this would target the people that the authority was trying to help the most. The Chairman stated that he would be seconding the proposal

Discussing the proposed amendment;

- Councillor Smith explained that she agreed with the proposed amendment and that it would be something different, attractive and accessible to people that would be excluded. She sought clarity from officers on whether the scheme would be affordable for people on this income. The Director Commercial stated that it would be affordable and the CA would need to see how lenders reacted. She explained that they may need to come back to Committee and the income criteria would need to be under constant review. Councillor Smith explained that the CA needed to think creatively and look at how they could overcome any barriers and find lenders that would be agreeable to this approach. The Chairman stated that it was the Mayor's original intention that the £100k Homes was accessible to a couple on minimum income. He highlighted that this would go a significant way to achieving this.
- Councillor Fuller stated that he was happy to support the amendment and agreed with Councillor Smith's comments. He stated that the worse thing that could happen was that it just became another tool that people have as an option. He highlighted that the scheme should target people that don't have other options.
- The Mayor stated that his vision had been mentioned several times and he stated that he wanted to give people who were forced into rent and on a low income, an option to own a house, for example someone who earned £18,000 a year. He explained that he wanted to break the cycle and ensure that there was extra criteria to ensure that the homes could not be sold above the market rate. He clarified that he was comfortable with the amendment and that it was a wise suggestion.

It was resolved unanimously to reduce the maximum income limit from £80K to £50K.

Discussing the report;

- Councillor Sargeant expressed concern about the definition of settlement within the policy. He stated that you would either have to live in a parish or adjoining settlement to get points. He gave an example of a farm house well away from a settlement, and questioned how this would be factored into the scoring. He explained that Councillor Fuller had raised this at the last meeting and stated that he was not sure that the CA had got this right. Officers stated that a settlement was defined as a parish boundary and that there would be a list of adjoining settlements. Officers clarified that they would review the wording to ensure that this was clear. **ACTION.** The Chairman highlighted that the CA would have a situation that would not resolve every issue.
- Councillor Smith stated that some parishes were very small and that the CA needed to be more sophisticated in its approach and that if there was a development in a parish that a similar number of people were able to bid for the homes if there was no local take up. She highlighted the use of the wording 'applicant that' and clarified it should read 'applicant who'. The Chairman asked officers to amend the wording accordingly in the policy. **ACTION**
- The Chairman stated that complete equity in the process was idealistic. He highlighted that there was some level of equity. He explained that if there was a scheme in a small village than a relatively small number of people would be eligible. He highlighted that there would be more homes available in the large settlements than the small settlements and that people in villages would find it harder.
- Councillor Smith queried the connectivity scoring and if it meant that the closer you are there would be a weighting issue, and questioned whether this was what was intended. The Chairman stated that this reflected the point that he had made earlier in the discussion and that there would be a lot more applicants than places available.
- Councillor Smith sought clarity on whether there was an appeals process. The Director Commercial stated that the appeals and complaints process was set out on page 11 of the policy.
- Councillor Fuller highlighted the unintended consequences point that he had raised at the last meeting. He explained that he was comfortable that the CA proceeded with the policy and that there needed to be a way forward but that the process needed to be kept under review.

- The Chairman highlighted that there was a need to encourage £100k homes to be built in some of the smaller villages.
- Councillor Sargeant stated that he supported what Councillor Fuller had said and that there was a need to keep a close eye on the scoring. He sought clarity on whether people that lived outside of the narrow geography could apply. The Director Commercial explained that anyone on the list could apply but that they would not necessarily get any points on local connectivity.
- Councillor Ambrose-Smith stated that he was disappointed that CPCA staff members would need to jump through another hoop to be eligible for a home and that it was clear on the form that they were a member of staff. Officers explained that this part of the policy was in the interests of transparency.
- Councillor Hickford queried what would happen if there were a lot of applicants with the same score. The Director Commercial stated that it would go by the first people to get their forms submitted.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the £100K Homes Allocations Policy and Guidance Document as set out in Appendix 1 subject to the following changes requested by the Committee:
 - i. Reduce the maximum income limit from £80K to £50K
 - ii. Change all wording in the documentation from 'applicants that' to 'applicants who'.

102. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN REVIEW

The Committee considered a report that gave an overview of the current Housing and Communities Committee related projects in the Combined Authority's 2020-24 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Introducing the report officers stated that members were invited to review and provide feedback on the projects to feed into the development of the 2021-25 Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Chairman explained that in 2.1 of the report there was an error and it should read Housing and Communities Committee , not Skills Committee

Discussing the report;

- Councillor Sargeant questioned why a few of the columns were empty. He stated that he assumed that there was no carry forward expected. Officers stated that the columns showed all current revenue allocations. Officers stated that anything that needed to be carried forward would be brought back to Committee at the end of the financial year. Officers explained that the second line showed what was going to be recycled over the years.

It was resolved unanimously to;

Note the current Medium-Term Financial Plan and consider whether there are any recommendations they wish to make to the Combined Authority Board in November.

103. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as Monday 9 November 2020.

Chairman