



CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 11 November 2019

Time: 14:00pm to 15:50pm

Present: Councillors David Ambrose – Smith, Graham Bull (Chairman), Roger Hickford, Mike Sargeant, Bridget Smith and Irene Walsh.

Apologies: Councillor Denise Laws.

25. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Apologies were received from Councillor Denise Laws. No declarations of interest were made.

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions received.

28. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee considered a report detailing the new governance arrangements of the Committee agreed at the Combined Authority Board meeting on 25 September 2019.

In presenting the report officers explained that the new governance arrangements had come into effect on 1 November 2019 and that that matter reserved to the Combined Authority Board were summarised under 2.2 - 2.4 of the report and matters delegated to the Skills Committee were detailed under points 2.5 – 2.7 of the report

In discussing the report Members queried whether there were any limitations on the amount of spend the Committee could approve. Officers clarified that the Committee had devolved decision making powers to approve stage release of budget under the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme covering the £60 million grant funding element. Officers explained that the Board could call in decisions made by the Committee and request that the decision is taken up to Board. Members requested greater clarity in terms of which bodies could make the decisions on the different Housing funds, set out in a table so that it could be easily understood. Members also requested further clarity on the Communities remit of the Committee and what this would cover as the focus of the Committee



so far had solely been on housing. Members requested that the Terms of reference be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion and that officers sent around the explanatory document ahead of the reports being published. **ACTION**

29. AGENDA PLAN

Members discussed the forward plan and requested that:

- The Committee Terms of reference be added to the January Committee for further discussion. **ACTION**
- The £70 million Cambridge City Council Programme Update and the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme Update be included on the agenda as a standing item for every Committee meeting and that this would be reviewed at a later date. **ACTION**
- Grants for Community Land Trusts and the development of £100,000 homes project be added to the Committee agenda as a standing item. **ACTION**
- The letter from Jake Berry, the Minister for Housing and Local Government in relation to the levelling of powers of all Combined Authority Mayors be discussed at Committee in the New Year following the General Election, in relation to the implications for Housing and Communities. Officers explained that this would be discussed at the Combined Authority Board meeting in the New Year. **ACTION**

30. £70M CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme led by Cambridge City Council as part of the Devolution Deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The update was based on the report 'Update on the Programme to Build New Council Homes Funded through the Combined Authority', presented to Cambridge City Council Housing Scrutiny Committee on 26 September 2019.

In presenting the report officers explained that there had been 12 completed units to date, two to year end 2018/19 and 10 units had been completed since the last report in July at Nuns Way and Wiles Close. A further two completions were due in 2019/20 and 77 in 2020/21. Officers clarified that since the last update to Committee that the identification and approval of schemes to the programme had increased to 546 homes to start on site by 31 March 2022. Schemes currently on site included Mill Road, Anstey Way, where tenants were due to move in four months early, Ventress Close, Akeman Street and Kingsway Medical Centre. Officers clarified that there was an ongoing boundary dispute at Kendal Way and that start on site had slipped to mid - 2020.



Schemes due to start on site in 2019/20, with planning submissions made included Clark Maxwell Road, where the developers Hills had been asked to resubmit the planning application, due to local planning changes. This was due to be determined in June 2020. There had been a one month delay to starts on site for Meadows and Buchan and Campkin Road.

In discussing the report Members:

- Queried whether Cambridge City Council were confident that they would meet the target of 500 homes by 2022. Officers explained that they were confident of meeting the target and expected to have the determinations for all 546 units identified by June 2020, and that all homes would start on site well in advance of the 2022 date. Officers explained that additional sites had also been identified and could be brought forward if necessary. Officers also clarified that all of the building supplies were in place to deliver the homes and the bricks has been brought over from the Netherlands. There had been a lower than projected spend so far of the anticipated spend of £20 million this financial year.
- Sought clarification on what the spending would be for the rest of the financial year. Officers explained that they expected there to be an accelerated spend in the final two quarters of the financial year.
- Requested a table that gave the trajectory of units delivered against budget and costs of units to be included in future reports. **ACTION**

A Member commented that they had been on a number of site visits as they were on the Planning Committee for Cambridge City Council and they had been very impressed with the work of the team. They recommended that Members request site visits if this was of interest.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the report on spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme, and the detail of schemes as provided within Cambridge City Council Housing Scrutiny Committee update 18 June 2019.

31. £100M AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME SCHEME APPROVALS GREAT WHYTE, RAMSEY - PLATFORM HOUSING GROUP

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit £600,000 of grant funding from the £100 million Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 15 new affordable homes at 94 Great Whyte, Ramsey.

In presenting the report officers explained that Platform Housing Group had applied to the Combined Authority for a £600,000 grant to deliver 15 new affordable homes as part of a development of 32 new homes. The site currently sat empty and there was a planning application for change of use of the land



and the demolition of the existing warehouse and store buildings. Officers explained that half of the homes would be shared ownership and the other half affordable housing.

In discussing the report Members:

- Sought clarity on how the viability of schemes was assessed by the Combined Authority, particularly in terms of value for money. Officers explained that they received a financial assessment and business case from providers as part of the application process and all submissions went through the due diligence processes by the CPCA housing team and were checked by the CPCA finance officers. Members discussed the potential use of an independent company to check the viability of schemes as a number of the constituent authorities currently used this method. Members requested that officers look into the potential costs and report back to Committee. **ACTION.** A Member commented that there was a good level of rented housing in the scheme. They suggested that in future the Local Housing Allowance Level was included on each approval report
- Questioned whether there was a maximum grant rate per unit. Officers explained that there was no formal cap and units generally ranged from £30,000 - £40,000. A Member commented that the subsidy for this scheme was at the high end and queried if officers were factoring in higher land values in South Cambridgeshire, against areas where land value was much less. Officers explained that they considered each submission on a case by case basis and that land costs were factored in to the business cases that formed part of the application process. Officers commented that they worked closely with providers and it was rare that a provider would abuse the system.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £600,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 15 new affordable homes at 94 Great Whyte, Ramsey.

**32. £100M AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME SCHEME APPROVALS
BRETTON COURT, BRETTON CENTRE, PETERBOROUGH, MEDESHAM
HOMES LLP**

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £1,687,500 from the £100 million Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 45 new affordable homes ranging from 1 and 2 bed flats, at Brettton Court, Brettton Centre, Peterborough.

In presenting the report officers explained that Medesham Homes had applied to the Combined Authority for £1,687,500 grant funding to deliver 45 new affordable homes. Officers clarified that the grant would be used to convert the units that were originally intended to be market units to Affordable Rent. This was an office to residential conversion and it had been identified that there was



a great need for one and two bedroom flats in the area to help in reducing the numbers on the housing waiting list, as well as helping those who were homeless.

In discussing the report:

- A Member commented that they were not comfortable with the application and did not feel they could support it. They explained that heating and energy issues had not been covered in the report and they had concerns that the energy standards of the current block would be well below that of a new build. The Director of Housing and Development clarified that the local housing team had been consulted on the development and they had made it clear that there was a pressing need for one and two bedroomed flats. He explained that the building could be converted to satisfy the relevant building control standards.
- A Member welcomed the development in Peterborough and acknowledged there was a real need for one and two bedroom flats in the area particular due to the level of homelessness.
- A Member commented that they had made their views clear about a similar application in Ely and that their views had not changed and they did not agree with reducing employment space. They also commented that the Local Government Association were lobbying against these type of developments. They commented that there was no site map and they could not judge how close the development was to a Doctors surgery and Green Space. Officers explained that the local facilities were covered in the report which included a health centre and shops and was close to transport links.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £1,687,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 45 new affordable homes ranging from 1 and 2 beds flats, at Bretton Court, Bretton Centre, Peterborough.

Immediately after the vote was taken Councillor Bridget Smith asked that her abstention be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

33. £100M AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME SCHEME APPROVALS WISBECH ROAD, MARCH, PE15 8EY

The Committee received a report that sought approval to commit to grant funding of £4,542,500 from the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme to enable delivery of 118 new two, three and four bed affordable homes of consisting of 98 affordable rent homes and 20 shared ownership homes.

In presenting the report officers explained that the development site was on Wisbech Road, March, to the east of Peterborough and north-east to Huntingdon and had a good road connection to the A141. The site was in walking distance of March town centre and offered a full range of local services



and employment opportunities. Officers clarified that the scheme was designed to National Space Standards were possible and that the scheme would operate under a Local Lettings Policy, in order to let homes to a wide demographic and economic range to create a balanced and sustainable community. Officers reiterated that outline planning permission had been granted and a Reserved Matters Application was to be submitted in November, with the final planning decision expected in March 2020.

In discussing the report:

- A member requested that the size of the developments be included in future reports. They noted that it stated that the scheme was being built to National Space Standards were possible. **ACTION**
- Members discussed the use of Methods of Modern Construction. A Member commented that they had visited the site and that they were fully supportive of the scheme. Another Member commented that they were pleased that these methods were being used and that they were highly energy efficient standards of construction and had potential in terms of bringing housing costs down in the future. They explained that they would like to see future larger schemes where construction happened on site. Officers commented that the company building used for this development were based in Yorkshire and had just received £30 million from Homes England to build everything on site. The Chairman commented that when the Combined Authority was being set up they looked into the potential of setting up a company to do this but that it was not pursued at the time. A Member queried whether the Housing and Communities Committee could look into the possibilities of establishing a company that could take these methods forward for future housing developments. The Chairman agreed that this could be looked into. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £4,542,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 118 new affordable homes of 2, 3 and 4 bed homes of affordable rent and shared ownership homes.

34. £100M AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme.

In presenting the Director of Housing and Development explained that the last update had been given at the July Committee and that £49.2 million of the fund had been allocated to schemes to date, of this £35.5 million had been contractually committed, comprising of £4.6 million in grants and £30.9 million in loan funding. £13.7 million had yet to be contracted. It was anticipated that a further £6.25 million would be contracted before the next Committee date. Of



this 908 units had been approved for grant and 38 units had been approved through the revolving fund. He confirmed that since July the Combined Authority had withdrawn from one scheme at Station Road in Thorney due to a number of issues that had arisen when going through the due diligence process. He clarified that there had been 202 starts on site and that between November 2019 and March 2020 there would be a significant rise in starts on site and that officers were confident that there would be 600 starts on site by year end in March 2020, as highlighted in the Business Plan. A significant number of these starts would be 234 affordable housing unit starts in Northstowe in January 2020, simultaneous to the starting of the Mare Fenn flood remediation works. He reiterated that so far there had been 48 completions and that a further 20 homes were due to be completed before the next Committee in January. In terms of the forward programme schemes totalling an additional 287 units were under active consideration and were expected to come forward to Committee or Board for approval before March 2020. He stated that there were 3000 units identified in the pipeline and that it would be reasonable to say that they would expect 30% of these units to come through the pipeline along with some windfall schemes. He explained to new Members of the Committee that there had been a hiatus between October 2018 and April 2019 and that the approvals at Committee today had started on the road to ensuring future targets would be met.

In discussing the report:

- A Member requested that a pie chart be added to future reports similar to the chart at 4.5 of the report, showing spend so far. Officers confirmed that this would be included in future reports. **ACTION**
- A Member questioned how progress was being measured against the Housing Strategy from last year, comparing where the Combined Authority said that they would be at this point as they were concerned that superficially it looked like the programme was doing well. They stated that 540 were infrastructure and not houses as such at Northstowe and Mare Fen which equated to less than £2,000 per unit. They stated that the spending on infrastructure should be separated out from spend on housing. They also queried the toolbox £40 million fund where it was projected by end of 2019-20 that 333 houses would be built but this currently stood at 38. They were concerned about how the £40 million was being used and whether targets would be met and that the Committee needed to be clear about what progress was being made against the figures stated in the Housing Strategy. The Director of Housing and Development commented that the Combined Authority had different sorts of activities which included infrastructure as well as housing and that he was in discussion in terms of looking at some infrastructure loans in the future. He stated that he would recommend keeping the reporting consistent to the Committees objective's as it currently stood. He confirmed that he would come back to Committee formally with an update on the £40 million fund activities and that he would circulate the Housing Strategy to the Committee for the benefit of



the new Members. **ACTION.** He asked the Monitoring Officer to circulate the other frameworks and strategies mentioned in the Committees Terms of Reference. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the report on spend and outputs for the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme.
- b) Note the forward pipeline of sites with affordable housing.

35. HOUSING NEEDS ANALYSIS

The Committee received a verbal update from officers on the Housing Needs Analysis work that was being undertaken by the Combined Authority.

In updating the Committee officers:

- Explained that a tender was due to let by local councils that would provide an update on certain types of housing need. Officers would also like to explore with the Committee what data they would like to see reported going forwards.
- Stated that there was a planning policy standard methodology for assessing minimum housing need and that on an annual basis this was reviewed in terms of population and affordable housing ratios. Planners then used this as evidence for the review of local plans.
- Clarified that the data was produced by Cambridgeshire Insight and this data was updated on an annual basis with a housing market bulletin every three months.
- Stated that a tender had just gone out for the current piece of work for the District Councils and the County Council to update the Strategic Housing Assessment. This covered the Cambridgeshire Housing Market.
- Explained that Peterborough historically had always been a different housing market and that they worked closely with colleagues in Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire on their Strategic Housing Assessment. The Cambridgeshire Strategic Housing Assessment was due to report in the middle of April next year and a report would be brought back to Committee at this stage. **ACTION.**
- Commented that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Strategic Economic Plan (CPIER) report set out the economic view of the area and this suggested that the housing range needed to be significantly more than in current local plans and that this would be tested when local plans came forward. Officers confirmed that an Issues consultation on the Fenland Local Plan had been released and that the Great Cambridge document was expected shortly.



- Reported that the Spatial framework had gone through phase one and that phase 2 was currently being developed and that the board were taking time to consider climate change implications and the levelling of powers letter.

The Chairman commented that it had been raised some months ago that the Housing Needs Analysis work was taking place but was unsure how extensive the work would be and the purpose of the work. Officers explained that the housing work for the Combined Authority was to look at the CPIER report in terms of the broad range of housing and to test whether it would deliver the level of economic growth that the report suggested. The review had suggested that the range of housing was appropriate rate of housing.

The Chairman also sought clarity from officers on the role the Combined Authority in the Cambridgeshire Insight work with District Councils. Officers clarified that Cambridgeshire Insight provided a broader set of data for the Combined Authority and they carried out monitoring work on their behalf. They produce a range of housing data funded by the District Councils

A Member commented that a report went to the Combined Authority Shadow Board on Affordable Housing Need and that this report would be useful in terms of reviewing alongside the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme. Officers explained that all of the District Council Housing Officers met as a forum and funded the work of Cambridgeshire Insight on affordable housing data. The most recent housing market bulletin would be circulated to the Committee for information. **ACTION**

The Chairman explained that there was also the work of the Ox-Cam Arc in terms of the Place workstream that dealt with housing needs on a large scale and that the Combined Authority were engaged with this work. A member explained that they were also involved with this work and at the next Ox-Cam Arc meeting they attended they were expecting to see some detail on the non statutory framework for the Ox-Cam.

36. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as 13 January 2020.

Chairman