



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

JAMES PALMER
CAMBRIDGESHIRE &
PETERBOROUGH MAYOR

Housing and Communities Committee Minutes

Date: Monday 11 January 2021

Time: 2.00pm – 3.47 pm

Present: Councillor Steve Allen, Councillor David Ambrose-Smith, Councillor Ian Bates, Councillor Dee Laws, Councillor Jon Neish, Councillor Mike Sargeant.

Apologies: Councillor Chris Boden (Chairman), Councillor Ryan Fuller, Councillor Roger Hickford and Councillor Bridget Smith

Part 1 - Governance Items

128. Appointment of Chair for the meeting

Councillor Dee Laws was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

129. Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies received from Councillor Boden, Councillor Laws attended as substitute, Councillor Fuller, Councillor Neish attended as substitute, Councillor Hickford, Councillor Bates attended as substitute and Councillor Smith

Councillor Ambrose- Smith declared a non-statutory disclosable interest on item 3.3 (i) £100m Affordable Housing Programme - Wisbech Road, Littleport, East Cambridgeshire this was in his County Council, District Council and Parish Council Division.

Councillor Bates declared a non-statutory disclosable interest item 3.3 (ii) £100m Affordable Housing Programme - Great Haddon, Off London Road, Yaxley, Peterborough as this was in his County Council Division.

130. Minutes of the Housing and Communities Committee meeting on 9 November 2020 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 9 November 2020 were approved as an accurate record. A copy will be signed by the Chairman when it is practical to do so.

In relation to the action log:

- Minute action 111 - Councillor Sargeant stated that he had a number of points of feedback on the draft response to the review on the original business case for the £100million Affordable Housing Programme and the policies the Combined Authority had followed, that had been circulated by the Director of Housing and Development. He requested that once the feedback was incorporated that the Chairman of the Committee Councillor Boden reviewed the document and gave his feedback before the final document came back to the Committee. **ACTION**
- Minute action 119 – Councillor Sargeant stated that it had been agreed at the last Committee that allocation policies would be part of all of the reports going forward. He noted that there was a general statement in the reports but that a summary of the policy was required so that Members could understand this when considering the report. He referred this back to the Director of Housing and Development for consideration. **ACTION**
- Minute action 120 – Councillor Sargeant noted that this action was shown as completed on the action log. He explained that he felt a fuller review of the role of the Committee was required and referred this back to the Director of Housing and Development and the Chairman for further consideration. **ACTION**

131. Culture and Tourism

The Committee received a report that briefed the Committee on the culture and tourism functions of the Combined Authority, which were currently allocated to the Housing and Communities Committee,

In presenting the report the Director of Housing and Development explained that the report recommended that the Combined Authority Board be invited to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution to remove the culture and tourism functions from the remit of the Housing and Communities Committee terms of reference and that those functions would continue to form part of the remit of the Business Board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Invite the Combined Authority Board to amend Chapter 10 [Housing & Communities Committee] of the Constitution so as to delete the words “(a) Culture and Tourism” in paragraph 3.2.9 and replace “(b)” with “(a)”.
- b) Invite the Combined Authority Board to note that culture and tourism would continue to form part of the Business Board’s remit to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area.
- c) Invite the Business Board to provide comment to the Combined Authority Board on the recommendation at (a).

132. Public Questions

No public questions were received. Questions were received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

133. Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

134. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the forward plan

Part 2 - Recommendations to Combined Authority Board

135. Community Land Trusts - Business Case

The Committee received a report that sought the Committees approval to recommend the Community Land Trust (CLTs) Business Case to the Combined Authority Board.

In discussing the report;

- Councillor Neish queried at what stage local authorities were involved in the process. Officers explained that local authorities were involved in the very early conversations so that common goals were met.
- Councillor Sargeant expressed his concern that it had taken four years to get to this stage in the process. He queried the use of the number of CLTs set up under evaluation methods being used as a benchmark and stated that he felt it should be the number of houses and a target on the percentage of affordable housing. He also queried whether co-ops were able to apply for the funding. Officers clarified that co-ops were able to apply for the funding. Officers explained that they could review the wording in relation to affordable housing to say that it would meet the level of affordable housing for each local authority. Officers agreed to review ahead of the report going to Board.
ACTION.
- Councillor Ambrose-Smith queried whether the funding could be used for community buildings e.g. Doctors Surgeries. Officers explained that if there was a view taken locally that community buildings were needed then this could be brought into a community project.
- Councillor Sargeant stated that community assets should be a subsidiary element to CLTs as the funding was for housing foremost.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the Community Land Trust Business Case at Appendix 1 of the report.

Part 3 - Programme Delivery

136. £70m Cambridge City Council Affordable Housing Programme Update

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme being led by Cambridge City Council as part of the Devolution Deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Introducing the report officers highlighted that the next update on the programme was due imminently therefore the update given at Committee reflected the September updated report that was presented at the November Committee. Officers explained that there was now over 500 homes with planning permission, of which 80 homes were completed, 270 homes were on site and 193 were expected to start on site. Officers highlighted two major schemes on site at Mill Road and Cromwell Road as well as one scheme that was not covered in the report but that had just started on site at Colville Road. Officers clarified that they were due to sign on the Meadows and Buchan project, Clark Maxwell Road and Campkin Road. Officers explained that on site they had been managing COVID risks as much as possible. Officers also highlighted some work that they had been doing with Hill to provide some modular homes for the homeless.

In discussing the report;

- Councillor Ambrose-Smith applauded the work that had been done by Cambridge City Council to get 346 homes shovel ready and that it was a different way of doing things.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report on spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme, and the next report will be provided in March 2021.

137. £100 million Affordable Housing Update

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme being led by the Combined Authority (CA).

The Committee received two questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this report and the written responses were read out by the Chairman and can be found at appendix 1 of the minutes.

Introducing the report the Director of Housing and Development explained that in spite of COVID and awaiting the conclusion from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) review that the programme was still on target for March 2022. He drew the Committees attention to the graph in

appendix 3 of the report which outlined the progress of the programme. He explained that the approved schemes were in appendix 1 of the report and totalled 49 schemes. He clarified that as the end date of March 2022 got closer, the focus was that already approved schemes would start on site on time. He stated that from discussions with development partners, officers had removed units from three schemes and they were listed in section 5.6 of the report and totalled 258 units. The Director explained that to ensure no starts on site would be lost over the next few months, whilst a decision from MHCLG was awaited, in order to progress schemes without over committing the funding position, officers proposed that some of the schemes approved at 9th November Committee and listed in Appendix 4 of the report, be approved for immediate completion of grant agreement and progression, and that some of the schemes previously 'unconditionally' approved that were listed in Appendix 5 of the report, that were expected to start later in 2021, now be held back, pending receipt of the additional monies from MHCLG.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Sargeant noted the Directors optimism that the programme would stay on target but stated that he was not convinced that he shared the same optimism. He noted the potential loss of Mare Fen completely, which would potentially mean that 1500 homes would need to be found and that would be a big ask. He stated that he did not feel reassured and that it was a bad situation to be in, that schemes would need to be shuffled and that there was a potential that some might fail completely. He asked what further reassurance the Director of Housing and Development could give the Committee that the programme would stay in track. The Director of Housing and Development explained that officers had been in communications with Homes England about Mare Fen, hence the adjustment had been made on this scheme regarding starts on site. He stated that the programme was always going to be back loaded and that he expected to be over 1,000 units on site at the end of March 2021. He explained that he was confident that the remainder of the programme would start on site within the required timescales. He explained that the risk at the moment was around the MHCLG review and that there was a concern that if this situation went on too long, that it would then raise issues with the delivery partners. He clarified that the agreements that had been held back were still being worked on and would be ready to go as soon as the funding was released. Councillor Sargeant stated that as £15 million of the outstanding amount was still overdue by over 16 months, that to expect the flood gates to open was too much to ask for and that he felt that there was not enough reality in the situation and that there was no plan B. The Director of Housing and Development stated in the short term the situation was manageable but that in the long term if the situation carried on that this would impact the delivery of the programme. He stated that the Civil Servants needed to work with the Combined Authority to give the assurances needed. Councillor Sargeant stated that in the original business case there was talk about other funding sources including the Growth Deal. He queried whether officers had looked at any of these further. The Director of Housing and Development explained that he would have welcomed looking at other funding resources however there would not have been any currently that would have fitted the timescales required. He stated that Manchester

Combined Authority had a Housing Investment Fund and how would like to see this replicated in this area. He confirmed that officers were looking at the current Homes England programme that was about to open for funding shortly.

- Councillor Ambrose-Smith expressed his support for the programme. He noted the difficulties from MHCLG but acknowledged the Directors confidence in the programme highlighted that it deserved Members support.
- Councillor Neish reiterated Councillor Ambrose-Smiths comments and acknowledged that it was very challenging times. He queried whether the Director had expected some of the schemes detailed at 5.5 of the report to have started already, and whether further support was needed from the local councils. The Director of Housing and Development explained that any schemes brought to Committee after March 2021 would require planning permission.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) note the progress of the delivery of the £100m affordable housing programme.
- b) approve the prioritisation of existing funds with a focus on schemes that are expected to start on site before end March 2021 as listed in appendix 4 of the report and hold back on completing already unconditionally approved schemes as listed in appendix 5 of the report pending receipt of further monies from MHCLG.

138. £100m Affordable Housing Programme - Wisbech Road, Littleport, East Cambridgeshire

The Committee considered a report that sought grant funding from the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme of £1,576,000 for an additional 38 homes, 28 at an affordable rent and 10 shared ownership units at Wisbech Road, Littleport, East Cambridgeshire.

Introducing the report officers explained that the site was zoned for residential use and that detailed Planning Approval was expected by the end of May 2021, with the land purchase completed shortly thereafter, with an expected Start on Site in July 2021. Officers clarified that all 38 homes would be delivered through support of the grant. Officers stated that the scheme would be constructed to produce modern sustainable and energy efficient homes whilst providing local employment for sub trades and adding value to the local economy.

In discussing the report;

- Councillor Sargeant commented that he could not support the scheme as not all of the units met the required level of national space standards. He also highlighted that as the scheme did not currently have planning permission that

this was also as risk and sought assurances from officers that the scheme would be viable. Officers explained that the scheme had outline planning permission and that the planning permission sought was for further matters

- Councillor Neish commented that it was down to the local authority to put forward schemes that met the standards set out in their local plan and not the National Space Standards that Councillor Sargeant referred to in every meeting.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Committing grant funding of £1,576,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 38 additional affordable homes comprising a mix of rented and shared ownership homes in East Cambridgeshire. Subject to confirmation of the release of balancing monies for the £100m programme from MHCLG.

139. £100m Affordable Housing Programme - Luminus Cluster site, Phase 2, Huntingdonshire

The Committee considered a report that sought grant funding from the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme for £749,000 for an additional 15 socially rented homes, at 7 individual sites, (Luminus sites, Phase 2) across Huntingdonshire.

Introducing the report officers explained that all of the units in the proposal were to be developed in accordance with Category 2 - Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings, with the exception of one unit which was a house at High Leys, St Ives, which would be Category 3 and was intended for adults with learning disabilities. Officers clarified that since writing the report the Housing Officer from Huntingdonshire had confirmed that this unit would now be used for an individual that was in need.

In discussing the report;

- Councillor Sargeant stated that it was unlikely that the Committee would support any units that were below 85% of the National Space Standards and that it was vital in the current situation that people had a decent space in which to live.
- Councillor Neish commented that the units in the proposal were to a highly acceptable standard and were the equivalent to life time homes and he supported the scheme.
- Councillor Laws highlighted that far more people would be working from home in the future and that space in the home was even more important.

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £749,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 15 additional affordable homes, all for social rent in Huntingdonshire. Subject to confirmation of the release of balancing monies for the £100m programme from MHCLG

140. £100m Affordable Housing Programme - Great Haddon, Off London Road, Yaxley, Peterborough

The Committee considered a report that sought grant funding from the £100 million Affordable Housing Programme for £2,270,000 for an additional 60 affordable units, 17 affordable rented units and 43 shared ownership units in Great Haddon, Off London Road, Yaxley, Peterborough.

Introducing the report officers stated that the site had outline planning consent, granted in June 2018 with no planning conditions yet discharged. Officers explained that Phase 1 which had 347 units in total, was being developed by Countryside Properties and that 60 additional units would not be delivered as affordable housing without this grant as the grant was enabling a tenure conversion from market to affordable housing units.

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Bates queried how District Councillors were informed of any applications put forward. Officers explained that Local Members were informed at the planning permission stage. Councillor Bates highlighted that there would be a lot of discussions prior to planning permission and questioned whether Local Members should be involved earlier on in the process.
- Councillor Laws commented that pre applications usually remained confidential. The Director of Housing and Development agreed to take away the comments and make further enquires in relation to the process and member involvement. **ACTION**

It was resolved by majority to:

- a) Commit grant funding of £2,270,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 60 affordable homes, with a mixture of affordable rent and shared ownerships units in Peterborough. Subject to confirmation of the release of balancing monies for the £100m programme from MHCLG and the release of monies from another already approved grant scheme being confirmed as not progressing, that will result in the total grant monies committed to the grant programme being no more than £60 million.

141. Update on Community Land Trusts and £100k Homes

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the progress made on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and £100k Homes.

Introducing the report officers explained that since the approval of the £100K homes allocation policy there had been three sites secured in Ely, Fordham and Great Abingdon where work had commenced. She stated that Alexander House in Ely was underway and that officers were awaiting a timetable for anticipated completion. She explained that on the Fordham site all allocations had been made and the site was near completion and that officers were still waiting for a construction timetable for the Great Abingdon site. She stated that officers were in active discussions with more developers on more sites and that she would ensure that future updates would be shared on progress with the Committee. **ACTION**

In discussing the report:

- Councillor Ambrose-Smith queried whether any changes were required to the allocations policy since it had been approved. Officers explained that the allocations policy had proved to be fit for purpose so far but that they would come back to Committee if any changes were required in the future.
- Councillor Sargeant expressed his concern in relation to the office conversion at Alexander House as there had been discussions previously at Committee on the suitability of office conversions for housing. Officers stated that the local planning authority had approved the scheme but that she would come back to Committee with further details on the scheme. **ACTION.** Councillor Sargeant stated that the Committee should be very careful in the future in supporting such conversions and that extra steps should be taken if schemes came forward that were not subject to planning permission. The Director of Housing and Development stated that officers would review the conversion schemes very carefully in the future so that they could reassure Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the update provided in this report.

Part 4 – Date of the next meeting

142. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as Monday 15 March 2021.