



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Housing and Communities Committee Minutes

Meeting: Wednesday 3 November 2021

Venue: Multi-Function Room, New Shire Hall, Cambridgeshire County Council

Time: 10.00am – 11.10am

Present:

Councillor Lewis Herbert - Chair and Member for Cambridge City Council
Councillor David Ambrose - Smith – East Cambridgeshire District Council
Councillor Steve Allen – Peterborough City Council
Councillor John Batchelor – South Cambridgeshire District Council
Councillor Samantha Hoy – Fenland District Council
Councillor Jon Neish – Huntingdonshire District Council
Councillor Lucy Nethsingha – Cambridgeshire County Council

Apologies:

Councillor Dee Laws – Fenland District Council
Councillor Alison Whelan – Cambridgeshire County
Councillor Ryan Fuller – Huntingdonshire District Council

Part 1 - Governance Items

26. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

Apologies received from Councillor Alison Whelan (substituted by Councillor Lucy Nethsingha), Councillor Ryan Fuller (substituted by Councillor Jon Neish) and Councillor Dee Laws (substituted by Councillor Samantha Hoy).

Councillor Lewis Herbert declared an interest in item 2.2 on the agenda as his partner was a Board Member for Cross Key Homes.

27. Minutes of the Housing and Communities Committee meeting on 6th September 2021 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 6th September 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

The action log was noted.

28. Public Questions

One public question had been received in relation to Community Land Trusts. A copy of the question and written response is available to view [here](#).

29. Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

30. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the Forward Plan.

Part 2 - Programme Delivery

31. Connecting Cambridgeshire Strategy Review

The Committee considered a report that outlined the proposed Digital Connectivity Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for 2021-2025.

Introducing the report officers highlighted;

- Reliance on connectivity accelerated in an unprecedented manner during the Covid pandemic and it was incredibly important moving towards recovery, however at a time when access to healthcare, education and jobs had become increasingly reliant on digital connectivity it had also highlighted and exposed inequality of access.
- The multiple workstreams, targeting the different aspects of digital connectivity from broadband, mobile, 'Smart' technology and public access Wi-Fi to ensure that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority area had the leading digital connectivity infrastructure required. Officers brought Members attention to the workstream which focused on Communities, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that they were digitally connected and able to access education, jobs, health, social care and other public services.
- The target was to meet and aim to beat 85% gigabit capable fibre coverage by 2025.

Discussing the report Members:

- Sought clarity on why the mobile element of the roll out was difficult and what was being done to tackle the issues. Officers explained that electronic communications legislation on how mobile communications were installed and the legal liabilities were both extremely complex. Officers stated that these complexities coupled with public disquiet in terms of the aesthetics and location of masts, complicated the planning process. Officers explained that work was ongoing to map the current mobile coverage at a District and County Level in conjunction with mobile operators.
- Queried whether £6.3 million would be sufficient to tackle the issues. Officers explained that they were currently in the pilot phase of the government's gigabit project which the programme had received £40 million to deliver. Officers stated that a lot of digital connectivity was commercially funded and that the £6.3 million would be used to ensure that collaborative working was key to create local digital infrastructure plans.
- Requested a joined-up discussion with the Constituent Authorities and providers in relation to 5g, as it was recognised that a more co-ordinated process to tackle the issues was required. Officers agreed to organise a discussion and ensure specialist telecommunications expertise were involved in the process. **ACTION**
- Requested that officers contact members of the Committee to understand any current issues in relation to the planning process and 5g so that this could be dealt with in association with the relevant district planning officers in a timely manner. **ACTION**

It was resolved by unanimously to:

- a) Approve the refreshed Digital Connectivity Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 2021-2025.
- b) Note and endorse the proposal to submit a business plan with delivery milestones for approval to the Committee in January 2022.

32. Implementation Update of the revised Affordable Housing Programme

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the progress of the affordable housing programme to March 2022.

Introducing the report the Director of Housing and Development highlighted;

- That a response from the Minister had now been received along with a meeting between Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) and CPCA officers which took place on the 10 September 2021. He clarified that the report updated the committee on the implications for the

revised Affordable housing programme for the period April 2021 to March 2022 and the potential implications for the CPCA for its housing activity from April 2022 onwards.

- There were six schemes that had not yet started on site, detailed in the table at the bottom of appendix 2 of the report. This equated to 187 units and £7.4 million of funding. He explained that DLUHC had agreed that the Combined Authority could substitute schemes in and out of the programme if schemes became no longer viable, and a process had been agreed for implementing this. He clarified that officers remained confident about the schemes that were due to start on site and that figures for the financial year would be as projected.
- A meeting with Homes England was due to be planned to discuss prospects for affordable housing beyond the end of March 2022 and Members would be updated on the outcome of discussions. **ACTION**
- Four of the five loans in the loan book were proceeding in line with the revised Covid-19 impact delivery programmes as advised and approved by the Board on 5 August 2020. (the loans are listed on the bottom table in Appendix 1 of the report). The exception was the ECTC loan on the MOD site at Ely where the projected repayment profile was slipping behind, due to a delay in the sale of the 15 affordable housing units in the scheme, which was expected to be resolved by the end of January 2022, and a slower than projected rate of sale of the market units over the past eight months. He stated that the loan was due to be re-paid by no later than 31 March 2023 and officers would continue to monitor ECTC's performance closely to meet the deadline.

Discussing the report Members:

- Praised the significant efforts of officers to ensure that the programme remained on track under tough circumstances.
- Queried whether the government had changed its attitude towards Combined Authorities and Affordable Housing Programmes in general. The Director of Housing and Development stated that the CPCA were unique in its devolution deal in terms of Affordable Housing Funding with an exception being Manchester which had an Investment Fund. The Chair explained that all Councils could apply to Homes England for investment in affordable housing and that there was an opportunity for the Combined Authority to assist in discussions.
- Questioned whether any analysis had been carried out on the impact of the funding the Combined Authority had received for Affordable Housing and how this compared in relation to other parts of the country. The Director of Housing and Development explained that some analysis had been carried out in January-February 2021 around value for money and that this data was fed back to government and that it gave a good value for money argument. The Chair stated that the South of the County had suffered because of the government rules on grant rates and this needed to be evidenced in the

figures. The Director of Housing and Development explained that the average grant rate for the whole programme was £38,300.

- Queried how many projects were still awaiting planning permission and what the risks were in relation to this. The Director of Housing and Development explained that every scheme has its own profile and issues and officers were monitoring issues closely. The Director of Housing and Development stated that the biggest risk was in relation to Northminster which DLUHC were aware of. The Member representing Peterborough City Council stated that planning was coming forward on this scheme and it was on stream to kickstart, and would add near to 300 units particularly for younger people.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the outcome of the Ministers decision for the CPCA 2021/22 Affordable Housing Programme and the implications for any CPCA aspiration for an affordable housing programme beyond March 2022
- b) Note the slight reductions in the unit numbers and amount of grant being provided on the two schemes below that have previously been approved by Housing Committee;
 - British Sugar Way, Peterborough – 74 units change to 70 units. Grant initially was 3,040,000 is being reduced to 2,830,000 pro-rata at the same rate per unit as originally approved.
 - Great Haddon, London Road, Yaxley, Peterborough – 60 units change to 58 units. The grant initially was 2,270,000 is being reduced to 2,194,333 pro-rata at the same rate per unit as originally approved.

33. £100m Affordable Housing Programme Scheme Approvals – Gloucester Centre, Morpeth Close, Orton Longueville, Peterborough

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to commit grant funding of £1,438,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 36 new affordable homes, as additionality on the Gloucester Centre, Morpeth Close, Orton Longueville site in Peterborough, with a tenure mix of 10 affordable rented homes and 26 of shared ownership homes.

Introducing the report officers highlighted that

- The site was recommended as a substitute for the non-progressing site, at Station Road, Littleport, Ely which was going to deliver 39 units, being replaced by the Gloucester Centre, Morpeth Close, Orton Longueville site, in Peterborough which would provide 36 additional units.
- The site had been given approval in principle by DLUHC as a substitute. This would ensure the maximum use of the grant being made available by DLUHC

in the CPCA 2021/22 affordable housing programme. The approved grant for the previous site at Station Road, Littleport, Ely, was originally £1,448,000 for 39 units. For Gloucester Centre, the grant being requested was £1,438,000 for 36 units.

- The grant rate per unit was marginally higher, because of the new shared ownership leasing model which came into effect in April 2021.
- The whole site had 100 units, 30% (30 units) were Section 106, 34 units were to be market sale which was a Vistry's bid accepted by Homes England, and the remaining 36 units, would be classed as an additionality and substituted to the CPCA as additionality with a tenure mix of 10 affordable rented and 26 shared ownership units.
- The site had outline planning consent, and a section 106 agreed, but was waiting on Reserved Matters (in regard to the design, appearance and exterior aspect) which would be concluded no later than Jan 2022.

Discussing the report Members:

- Queried what officers meant when they state that DLUHC had accepted the scheme as a substitute and if there was a process established for substitutions. The Director of Housing and Development stated that DLUHC had agreed a process with the CPCA to provide substitutions for schemes that would not deliver by March 2022, and that they had approved this scheme subject to the approval by the Committee.
- Questioned the tenure mix that had been chosen. Officers stated that the tenure mix had been based on viability by Cross Keys.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Committing grant funding of £1,438,000 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 36 new affordable homes, as additionality on the above site, with a tenure mix of 10 affordable rented homes and 26 of shared ownership homes. DLUHC have already confirmed their approval of this as a substitute for a non-proceeding site.

Part 3 – Date of the next meeting

34. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as Monday 10 January 2022.