CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 27 April 2020

Time: 14:00 p.m. to 15:50 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 (substituting for Councillor Irene Walsh), Councillor David Ambrose-Smith, Councillor Chris Boden (Chairman), Councillor Ryan Fuller, Councillor Roger Hickford, Councillor Mike Sargeant and Councillor Bridget Smith (From 14:08 p.m.).

Apologies: Councillor Irene Walsh

65. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Apologies were received from Councillor Irene Walsh.

No declarations of interest were made.

66. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG – 9 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 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.

The action log was noted.

In discussion:

- A Member queried whether officers had received any information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) regarding the release of funds for the Affordable Housing Programme. The Director for Housing and Development explained that ongoing discussions were taking place with the MHCLG regarding the completion of the yearend review. As part of their Covid-19 response, the MHCLG had released a proportion of Cambridge City Council's £70m Affordable Housing Program funding to them. He suggested that the MHCLG had acknowledged that due to Covid-19, there was going to be a delay to the completion of the yearend review for the Combined Authority's £100m and Cambridge City Council's £70m Affordable Housing Programme.

- The Director for Housing and Development explained that due to the delayed completion of the yearend review, a proportion of the Combined Authority's £170m Affordable Housing Programme funding for last financial year had not yet been received. He stated that depending on the how the Covid-19 situation developed, further discussions were expected to be had with the MHCLG next month to resolve this.

- A Member queried whether the risk assessment for the Cambridge City, Histon Road scheme had been carried out, and if so, whether work could now begin on the site. The Director for Housing and Development confirmed that following the schemes approval by the Combined Authority Board on the 25th March 2020, the acquisition of the site and facility agreement with Laragh Homes had been completed. He commented that Laragh Homes had now started some limited work on the site.

- A Member informed the Committee of the approach adopted by Homes England in regards to the national described space standards (NDSS), and queried whether the Combined Authority were adopting the same approach. The Director for Housing and Development stated that the Combined Authority's approach did generally align with Homes England's. He explained that within their planning application form, applicants were asked questions regarding unit numbers and sizes. Officers were analysing all applications carefully, if an issue was identified, then they would talk to the developer to identify a solution. The Member suggested that it would be beneficial if all future Affordable Housing Programme Scheme approval reports contained more information on space standards. The Director for Housing and Development confirmed that this information would be included in future reports. **(Action required)**

67. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions received.

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

68. REMIT AND IDENTITY OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a report clarifying the position of their communities remit. The Director for Housing and Development drew the Committees attention to the information found within the report and highlighted section 2.3. He explained that culture and tourism functions were delivered by constituent Councils and the Connecting Cambridgeshire project was led by Cambridgeshire County Council. Therefore, the nature of the Committee's remit in these areas would be one of strategic oversight.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- raised concerns regarding the fact that the culture and tourism industry in the Combined Authority's area was under threat due to Covid-19. The Member suggested that because of this, the Committee should be cautious of labelling themselves as having strategic oversight. The Director for Housing and Development stated that the Committee's culture and tourism remit and its relationship with the constituent Councils needed to be clear.

- suggested that officers could raise these concerns with the Business and Skills Team. This would ensure that more information could be included in future reports regarding how the Combined Authority were supporting the businesses in the leisure sector.

- informed the Committee that the culture and tourism industry made up 9.2% of Cambridge City's economy. The Chairman, with agreement of the Committee stated that it would be beneficial at the next meeting, to be presented with a position statement highlighting the challenges faced by these businesses across the Combined Authority area and outlining the specific responsibilities of the Committee, the Combined Authority and its partners in supporting them. **(Action required)**

- commented that compared to Peterborough, Cambridge's economy was driven more by culture and tourism.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the extent of the Communities remit for the Housing and Communities Committee as being:

a) Strategic oversight of any new community programmes not reserved to the Combined Authority Board, including culture and tourism and the Connecting Cambridgeshire project.

b) Development of community programmes where there is a housing scheme being delivered by the Combined Authority of sufficient scale that it warrants the development of a community programme

69. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan was noted.

The Chairman informed the Committee that it would meet next on the 22nd June 2020.

70. COMBINED AUTHORITY FORWARD PLAN

No comments were made on the Combined Authority Forward Plan.

71. £100M AHP APPROVAL OF REVISED BUSINESS PLAN FOR ANGLE DEVELOPMENTS (EAST) LIMITED.

The Lawyer and the Director for Housing and Development left the meeting for the duration of the item due to their roles as directors of Angle Holdings Limited and Angle Developments (East) Limited respectively. Legal advice was provided by an alternative Lawyer.

The Committee considered a report inviting them to recommend to the Combined Authority Board that consent be given to the adoption of the revised business plan for Angle Developments (East) Limited. Members noted the background of the report. The Development Manager stated that the revised business plan would allow the company to facilitate the delivery of more affordable homes, including £100k homes in the Combined Authority area and support smaller and medium sized schemes up to 150 units. He commented that the company were looking to assess the impacts of Covid-19 on the housing market. It was intended to review the business plan in 6 months' time, and update it if necessary.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- raised concerns regarding the fact that the year 1 objectives on the revised business plan had slipped from 2019/20 to 2020/21. The Member commented that progress had been slow on delivering these targets and sought assurance that the targets would be delivered. He queried whether in a years' time there would be further slippage. The Development Manager stated that he was unable to comment on the activities of Angle Developments (East) Ltd. The Chairman suggested that he would not be surprised if further changes were made to the revised business plan in the next 6 to 12 months. He stated that it was important to regularly review this document.

- suggested that the report should clearly outline the differences between the initial and revised business plan. The Development Manager commented that the initial business plan was generic. Whereas the revised plan provided more information on the operating model and structure of the company and refined the types of activities it would focus on.

- sought more information regarding the decision making process of Angle Developments (East) Ltd. The Development Manager explained that if the company wanted to invest in a housing scheme, it would have to seek funding approval from the Combined Authority Board. It was noted that through this process, the Committee would be able to comment on the proposed schemes.

- expressed concerns regarding the report making reference to converting offices into housing. The Development Manager clarified that not every office to housing scheme would be a conversion. In

some instances, offices would be demolished and new residential infrastructure would be built. The Member suggested that the MHCLG did not support office to housing conversions and stated that the Combined Authority should not either. The Chairman clarified that currently, the Combined Authority had no further office to housing conversion proposals in the pipeline.

It was resolved by a majority to:

Recommend to the Combined Authority Board that consent be given to the adoption of the revised business plan for Angle Development (East) Limited at Appendix 3.

72. £70 MILLION AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME - CAMBRIDGE CITY

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

Cambridge City Council's Strategic Director informed the Committee that update reports such as this were required to be presented to their Housing Scrutiny Committee before being presented to this Committee. However, on this occasion, the report had been published online, but the Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting had been cancelled due to Covid-19. It was noted that due to the timings of the respective Committee meetings, the report did not always contain the most up to date information. An error was highlighted in paragraph 4.3 of the report, it suggested that Cambridge City Council had drawn down £37,572,679. However, at the time of writing this report, it had only been around £24m.

The Strategic Director explained that due to Covid-19, concerns had been raised regarding the safety of workers on their construction sites. A number of risk assessments had been carried out, and as a result, all work on their sites had stopped. However, she confirmed that 13 homes had been completed and larger sites such as Mill Road and Cromwell Road had reopened as social distancing measures could be achieved in these instances.

She explained that the difficulties experienced were in regards to selling the properties. She informed the Committee that 8 houses had been sold on Mill Road, with the contracts being signed remotely. It was noted that Cambridge City Council were continuing their efforts to bring back constructions teams onto sites, subject to further advice from government on social distancing measures.

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Note the report on spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme, and the next report will be provided in April 2020.

73. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - BRAMPTON PARK

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £270,002 from the £100m Affordable Housing Programme to enable delivery of 6 additional shared ownership homes at Brampton Park, Brampton, Huntingdonshire.

In presenting the report, officers explained that ReSi Housing Ltd had applied to the Combined Authority for a £270,002 grant to deliver 6 shared ownership units as part of a development site hosting approximately 118 new homes. The six units would consist of 2 two bed, 3 three bed and 1 four bed homes.

Individuals Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- sought confirmation as to why they were not being presented with more proposals for the development of units with a rented tenure. The Housing Programme Manager confirmed that the proposals had entered into the Combined Authority's pipeline as shared ownership tenures. The Chairman sought confirmation that there was no preference given to a specific type of tenure. The Housing Programme Manager confirmed that this was the case.

- raised concerns regarding the Combined Authority taking over responsibility for units which could not be sold on the open market. The Member suggested that by doing this, the Combined Authority were just assisting developers sell homes, rather than developing new affordable homes. The Housing Programme Manager stated that she was not aware that developers were offloading market units onto the Combined Authority.

- suggested that in Huntingdonshire, Housing Associations had been looking to acquire extra shared ownership units on housing developments. He expressed support for the scheme and stated that it would enable more people to become home owners.

It was resolved unanimously to:

> Commit grant funding of £270,002 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 6 additional shared ownership homes at Brampton Park, Brampton, Hunts.

74. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - HEYLO ST THOMAS PARK

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £476,997 from the £100m Affordable Housing Programme to enable delivery of 10 additional shared ownership homes at St Thomas Park, Ramsey, Huntingdonshire.

In presenting the report, officers explained that Heylo Homes had applied to the Combined Authority for a £476,997 grant to deliver 10 shared ownership homes. The anticipated completion date for the site was around June 2020. However, due to Covid-19, it was expected that there would be a 3-6 month delay. The units were all family sized, consisting of 3 and 4 bed homes.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- raised concerns regarding the space standards of the units and queried whether the Combined Authority had analysed the room layouts of the units. The Housing Programme Manager confirmed that officers had. She commented that all the units had received planning permission and therefore they assumed that it must have met the necessary space standard requirements. The Director for Housing and Development reiterated the fact that future reports would contain more information on space standards.

- commented that the Combined Authority's Housing Strategy stated that it would provide high quality homes for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. She suggested that just because a development receives planning permission, does not mean that it was deserving of Combined Authority funding. She stated that all houses receiving Combined Authority funding should be of a high quality.

- commented that the Combined Authority should not intervene with the sovereignty of individual planning authorities and developers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Member stated that the Combined Authority had been more effective in the delivery of affordable homes compared to Homes England. He suggested that the Combined Authority did not have to replicate the approach adopted by Homes England.

- agreed that the Combined Authority should be delivering high quality homes. The Member raised concerns regarding the size of the units being proposed and commented that these homes would not have received planning permission in Cambridge City. The Chairman stated that if the Combined Authority were not providing smaller houses in Fenland, they would not be providing any at all. He commented that the housing issues experienced in the northern and southern areas of the County were significantly different. The Chairman with agreement of the Committee, requested that officers create a report outlining the very different challenges experienced by the northern and southern areas of the County in delivering affordable housing. **(Action required)**

- highlighted the fact that Cambridge City had some of the worst housing affordability issues in the country. The Member suggested that the Combined Authority had to take into account the specific

circumstances of all areas within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough when delivering affordable homes.

- requested that future reports contain a wider site plan. **(Action required)**

It was resolved majority to:

Commit grant funding of £476,997 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 10 additional shared ownership homes at St Thomas Park, Ramsey, Hunts.

75. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - HEYLO LARKFLEET SITE

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £1,379,072 from the £100m Affordable Housing Programme to enable the delivery of 32 additional shared ownership homes over four different development sites in the Combined Authority area.

In presenting the report, officers explained that Heylo Homes had been working with Larkfleet Homes to construct 32 units at Whittlesey Green (Fenland), Sandpit Road (Peterborough), Harriers Rest (Peterborough) and Cromwell Fields (Huntingdonshire). The site in Fenland had 11 units, the two sites in Peterborough had 15 units in total and the last site in Huntingdonshire had 6 units.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- stated that they could not support the proposal as at least one of the schemes did not meet the necessary space standards criteria set out by Homes England.

It was resolved by a majority to:

Commit grant funding of £1,379,072 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 32 additional shared ownership homes at 4 sites across the Combined Authority area.

76. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - KEEPMOAT PASTON

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £1,000,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing Programme to enable the delivery of 23 additional shared ownership homes at Roman Fields, Paston, Peterborough.

In presenting the report, officers informed the Committee that Keepmoat Homes were developing a larger site which hosted 457 units in total, 23 of these units were to be delivered as shared ownership homes. The estimated completion date for the site was quarter 4 of 2021/22. However, due to

Covid-19, the site had been shut down. The units were a mixture of 2 and 3 bed houses.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- stated that they could not support the proposal as at least one of the properties did not meet the necessary space standards criteria set out by Homes England.

- queried whether any additional units on this site were being developed. The Housing Programme Manager confirmed that these were the only units on this site in the Combined Authority's pipeline.

It was resolved by a majority to:

> Commit grant funding of £1,000,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 23 additional shared ownership homes at Roman Fields, Paston, Peterborough.

77. £100M AHP SCHEME APPROVALS - KEEPMOAT JMS

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to commit grant funding of £430,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing Programme to enable the delivery of 10 additional shared ownership homes at JMS, Damson Drive, Peterborough.

In presenting the report, officers stated that Keepmoat Homes would construct and market the shared ownership homes under the Heylo Home Reach Shared Ownership Scheme. On site development had started in February 2018 and was estimated to be completed by quarter 1 of 2021/22. However, this was expected to be delayed due to Covid-19. The ten shared ownership homes ranged from two to four bed houses.

It was resolved unanimously to:

> Commit grant funding of £430,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 10 additional shared ownership homes at JMS, Damson Drive, Peterborough.

78. £100 MILLION AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

In presenting the report, attention was drawn to the information found within appendix 1, 2 and 3 of the report. The Director for Housing and Development stated that the Covid-19 situation had generated additional risk to the programme. The short term impacts were that contractors had not been working on site, which had led to further delays on the completion of

schemes. It was anticipated that more starts on site would occur in the next couple of months.

He commented that the wider impacts of Covid-19 on the programme depended on the duration of the lockdown measures. He suggested that Covid-19 may have an impact on the wider economy, which would then filter down into the housing market. He also suggested that it was too early to predict the true long term outcomes of Covid-19 on the housing market, but there had been a clear short term impact. Officers would continue to monitor the key indicators and report back to the Committee with updates on the situation as it evolved.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- queried whether the Government had been proactive in identifying the potential impact of Covid-19 on the delivery of affordable housing. The Director for Housing and Development suggested that the Combined Authority had not been asked by the MHCLG to complete an impact assessment. He stated that once asked, the Combined Authority would provide one.

- requested that Appendix 1 of the report contain more information on the tenure types of the schemes approved by the Combined Authority. The Director for Housing and Development stated that this information would be included in future reports. **(Action required)**

- thanked officers for providing a map outlining the geographical distribution of approved housing grant funding.

- sought more information regarding the number of schemes in the Combined Authority's pipeline and the number of schemes still requiring authorisation. The Director or Housing and Development explained that after the decisions made today, 1299 units had been authorised. There was roughly around 3000 units still in the pipeline. He commented that they were in healthy situation, but it was critical to get these schemes approved.

- raised concerns regarding the number of starts on site. The Director for Housing and Development stated that the Combined Authority would continue working with its partners to ensure that all schemes were being monitored and were progressing smoothly. He reiterated the fact that Covid-19 had caused, and would continue to cause risk to the delivery of the programme.

- queried whether more infrastructure grants would come forward. The Director for Housing and Developments suggested that there were potential opportunities for infrastructure grants. However, nothing could be confirmed at this time.

- queried whether future schemes could be funded at the same level as the schemes already completed. The Director for Housing and Developments explained the Combined Authority needed to deliver around 700 more units from £33m.

It was resoled unanimously to:

Note the progress of the delivery of the £100m programme.

79. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as the 22nd June 2020. It was stated that the specific arrangements for the meeting would be confirmed nearer the time.

Chairman