

# Housing and Communities Committee Minutes

Date: Monday 15 March 2021

Time: 2.00pm – 3.54pm

Present: Councillor Steve Allen, Councillor Chris Boden (Chairman), Councillor David Ambrose-Smith, Councillor Mike Davey, Councillor Mark Goldsack, Councillor Ryan Fuller and Councillor Bridget Smith

Apologies: Councillor Mike Sargeant

## Part 1 - Governance Items

### 143. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

Apologies received from Councillor Mike Sargeant, Councillor Mike Davey attended as substitute. No declarations of interest were made.

The Chairman announced that item 2.8 on the agenda 'Houghton & Wyton Community Land Trust - Start Up Grant Application' had been removed from the agenda due to further clarification being required on the information presented within the application. The Chairman stated that a report would be brought to a future meeting once clarification had been received.

The Chairman also announced that a replacement report had been published for agenda item 2.1 relating to the £100M Affordable Housing Programme and that the joint Chief Executives were in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

The Chairman explained that there had been correspondence over the weekend in relation to the possibility of the Mayor attending the meeting and his willingness to answer questions in relation to item 2.1 on the agenda. He clarified that in particular, a point had been raised about the Mayor not speaking until the particular agenda item was discussed. He stated that he had checked the Constitution and the Mayor was not entitled to attend and speak to Members at the Committee as he had not taken up his position on the Committee as a non-voting Member. He clarified that he would raise this issue at the next Leaders Strategy meeting. He explained that he had hoped to suspend the relevant rule which stopped the Mayor attending, however he clarified that Committees were not able to suspend that particular rule, this would also be raised at the Leaders Strategy meeting.

#### 144. Minutes of the Housing and Communities Committee meeting on 11 January 2021 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 11 January 2021 were approved as an accurate record. A copy will be signed by the Chairman when it is practical to do so.

The action log was noted.

#### 145. Public Questions

The Chairman stated that a number of questions had been received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that these questions would be taken at agenda item 2.1. No public questions were received.

#### 146. Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

#### 147. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the forward plan

### Part 2 - Programme Delivery

#### 148. £100 Million Affordable Housing Programme – Urgent Report

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the £100m affordable housing programme and £70m Cambridge City Council affordable housing programme following notification from the Minister of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of the outcome of their review of the £100m affordable housing programme and the Cambridge City Council £70m affordable housing programme.

The Committee received six questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to this report along with a supplementary question raised by Councillor Scutt at the meeting. The Chairman responded to the questions in the meeting and the written response can be found at appendix one of the minutes.

Councillor Smith raised a point of clarification in relation to the Chairman's response to the supplementary question in relation to potential alternative funding sources. Councillor Smith stated that there should be careful consideration of what was said in relation to certainty of future funding of the scheme. She referred to paragraph 3.3 of the report which set out the conditions that would need to be adhered to in order for MHCLG to make further funding available. The Chairman stated that the news was substantially better than some of the earlier correspondence and that funding was extremely likely and that discussions between MHCLG and the Joint Chief Executives of the Combined Authority were ongoing.

Introducing the report the Joint Chief Executive, John Hill, drew Members attention to paragraph 3.3 of the report which set out the conditions by which MHCLG would make further funding available. He stated that the new regime would require more hands-on monitoring of the Combined Authority's Schemes by MHCLG. He also explained that the agent role that the Combined Authority had been providing in relation to the £70 million Cambridge City Council affordable housing programme would cease.

In discussing the report;

- Councillor Smith stated that the Mayor had referenced a second letter from the Minister and that this letter should be made available to Members of the Board. Councillor Smith put forward an amendment to the report recommendations (attached at Appendix two of the minutes) and asked that each amendment be voted on in turn. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Davey.

In debating the amendment:

- Councillor Davey stated that the key priority was the residents and that the programme needed to be one that could be maintained going forwards. He commented that it would be difficult to know how the programme could be improved unless someone was brought in to carry out an independent review of the programme.
- Councillor Fuller queried if the conditions set out at 3.3 of the report had come from the second letter sent by the Minister. He stated that without criticising officers the Committee had been given several reassurances that had turned out not to be accurate. He explained that he was prepared to support Councillor Smith with her amendment to the first recommendation which called for full and public disclosure of all communication between MHCLG and /or ministers with the CPCA and /or The Mayor regarding the £100m Affordable Housing Programme. The Joint Chief Executive stated that the conditions accurately reflected discussions with the Mayor, authorised access to correspondence and discussions with MHCLG officials. The Monitoring Officer explained that any requests for the letter would be dealt with through the authorities Freedom of Information procedure. Councillor Fuller stated that there had been a resistance to sharing correspondence on decisions that the Committee were expected to make and on that basis he was inclined to want to see the letter.
- Councillor Goldsack questioned recommendation five in terms of a detailed report to be brought back to an emergency meeting of the Housing Committee within the next four weeks. He stated that this would be quite an exercise and that the timescales were not realistic. The Chairman clarified that a response to government to agree the terms set out in the report was required by 17 March which required approval from the Committee on the recommendations set out in the report. He stated that if the recommendations were approved conditionally this may not satisfy the Minister and would be potentially

dangerous. He clarified that a full report would be brought back to the next Committee meeting in June.

- Councillor Smith explained that she was astounded that as a Board Member she would have to resort to putting in a Freedom of Information request for the second letter and had always worked on the assumption of full disclosure for Board Members. She stated that the Combined Authority would lose the trust of residents. She stated that not only had the Combined Authority failed to secure a second devolution deal but that it had a large part of it taken away due to the Ministers lack of confidence in the Housing Programme. She clarified that the only way to re-establish the confidence of the public, as well as developers and social landlords, was to be completely open and transparent and have external parties review the programme. She explained that this review could take a considerable amount of time so an action plan was required in the short term to give reassurances.

On bringing the debate on the amendment to a close, the Chairman agreed that each amendment could be voted on in turn. In putting the amendment to the vote, the amendment was defeated.

In debating the original report recommendations;

- Councillor Smith sought clarification on if the £40 million revolving fund was essentially being wound up. The Chairman stated that this was correct. She also sought clarity on whether it was the end of the £100k homes programme. The Chairman stated that it was his understanding that it was not the end of this programme. The Director of Housing and Development stated that the authority was looking for developers to bring the £100k homes through the planning process. Councillor Smith stated that she would like to see a plan of how the £100k homes scheme might continue. She explained that she would also like to see how much this scheme had cost so far and whether this had delivered value for money. The Chairman stated that this could be brought back to Committee at its next meeting. **ACTION**
- Councillor Smith queried whether MHCLG had seen appendix two of the £100 million affordable housing update report and why MHCLG did not believe that the programme delivered value for money. The Director of Housing and Development stated that the Combined Authority had supplied MHCLG with the final draft of its value for money assessment however had not received any comments back on the assessment yet. Councillor Smith queried what MHCLG would want to happen with the repaid loan money and commented that Covid was going to have a negative impact on the loans being repaid. The Chairman stated that MHCLG had been clear that any monies that were returned were to be allocated to the remainder of the programme that would be fulfilled in 2021-22. The Joint Chief Executive, John Hill, stated that there was uncertainty on what would happen to loans post March 2022 and that further clarification would be sought in relation to this. The Director of Housing and Development stated that reviewing the repayment of loans was an ongoing exercise and that the £100million affordable housing update report

contained a graph that showed the current projection of repayments. Councillor Smith stated that at the start of the £100 million affordable housing programme, Members had been led to believe that money would be allocated based on need. She stated that the Greater Cambridge area had the biggest housing issues. She stated that a lot of the housing was currently allocated in the Peterborough area and that this needed to be reviewed as part of the report to the next meeting. The Chairman explained that this would be included in the review of the programme. **ACTION**

- Councillor Davey queried how many homes had been lost as a result of the announcement and queried if certain areas would be disproportionately impacted and that local accountability was needed. The Chairman stated that it was not yet known whether homes would be lost until further discussions had taken place and that disproportionate impact would be covered in the report that would come to the next Committee meeting. The Chairman also stated that Oxfordshire Combined Authority were facing similar issues.
- Councillor Smith requested that each recommendation be voted on separately. The Chairman agreed to take each recommendation separately.

It was resolved by majority to recommend that the CPCA Board:

- i. Approve the revised proposals for the future delivery and completion of the £100m Affordable Housing Programme as outlined in paragraph 3.3.
- iii. Instruct the Chief Executives to inform the MHCLG of the recommendation as agreed and bring forward a report to the Board the arrangements for the implementation of the revised scheme.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend that the CPCA Board:

- ii. Note the revised arrangements for the operation and completion of the £70m Cambridge City Housing Programme.

#### 149. £70m Cambridge City Council Affordable Housing Programme Update

The Committee received a report that outlined the spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme.

Introducing the report officers explained that there would be 526 Starts on Site by the end of March 2021 and 540 unit were expected to be built in total. Officers stated that the Clarke Maxwell site was expected to start in April 2021 with the Tedder Way and Kendall Road schemes currently going through the tribunal system due to boundary disputes. Officers also clarified that six modular pods for the homeless had been handed over in Kings Hedges.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report on spend and outputs for the £70 million Affordable Housing Programme.

#### 150. Update Report on North East Cambridge Programme

The Committee received a presentation that gave an update on Cambridge City Council's North East Cambridge Programme (attached at appendix three of the minutes).

In discussing the presentation;

- The Chairman queried how many houses would be built in South Cambridgeshire. Officers stated that they would review and come back to Committee with the figures. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report (approved by Executive Councillor following scrutiny at Strategy and Resources Committee, Cambridge City Council on February 8th 2021) and presentation as an update on the North East Cambridge Programme

#### 151. £100 million Affordable Housing Update

The Committee considered a report that gave an update on the £100 million affordable housing programme.

Introducing the report, the Director of Housing and Development explained that there had been some changes to the report since the announcement from MHCLG. He stated that the scheme approvals were set out at 5.3 of the report and scheme removals were set out at 5.4 of the report. He explained that the Mare Fen Scheme at Northstowe had been removed from the list which had resulted in the removal of 253 units from the programme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress of the delivery of the £100m affordable housing programme.
- b) Approve the prioritisation and release of existing funds on further schemes from the existing programme that are expected to start on site before end March 2021, as listed in appendix 4.

#### 152. £100 Million Affordable Housing Programme Heylo Portfolio

The Committee considered a report that sought grant funding of £2,168,625 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 60 affordable homes of

shared ownership homes all over the region, East Cambridgeshire, Peterborough City Council and Huntingdonshire.

Introducing the report officers explained that there were four sites in total all offering share ownership. Officers clarified that the report outlined 14 two bed properties and this was an error and there were 16 two bed properties in total at the Bayard Plaza site in Peterborough. Officers stated that all of the properties would be for local people and that all of the units outlined were near completion.

It was resolved by majority to;

- a) Commit grant funding of £2,168,625 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 60 affordable homes of shared ownership homes all over the region, East Cambridgeshire, Peterborough City Council and Huntingdonshire.

### 153. £100 Million Affordable Housing Programme Alconbury Weald, Rentplus

The Committee Committing received a report that sought grant funding of £989,325 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 22 additional affordable homes, with a range of rent to buy homes at Alconbury Weald, Huntingdonshire.

Introducing the report officers explained the site was currently near completion and consisted of 22 units originally intended as open market to become new affordable homes. Officers stated that all of the units were over and above the National Described Space Standards. Officers explained that when the units are purchased Rentplus would gift the purchasers a 10% deposit which would enable them to go to any high street lender and secure a mortgage. Officers explained that tenants would be supported throughout their whole tenancy through a partner housing association. Officers clarified that there would be the option to eventually buy the property and that the properties would be made available to local people.

Discussing the report;

- Councillor Smith stated that she was happy to see that the homes exceeded the National Described Space Standards.
- Councillor Goldsack queried whether the properties would be made available to those moving to the area to work. Officers explained that they understood this to be the case.

It was resolved unanimously to

- a) Committing grant funding of £989,325 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 22 additional affordable homes, with a range of rent to buy homes at Alconbury Weald, Huntingdonshire.

## 154. Update on Community Land Trusts and £100k Homes

The Committee received a report that gave an update on Community Land Trusts and the £100k Homes programme.

Introducing the report officers explained that Haddenham Community Land Trust had completed the first phase of their scheme and had welcomed their first tenants. Officers clarified that Little Thetford Community Land Trust had just had their public launch and the Great Shelford Community Land Trust had just started on site. Officers explained that there had been two changes to the Allocations Policy that Members were being asked to approve which were set out at 2.9 of the report.

Discussing the report:

- Councillor Smith queried how many £100k homes had been completed and how many would be completed with the schemes that had been identified so far. Officers explained that there were three schemes on site and two schemes coming forward in Ely and Great Abbington which would deliver four £100k homes each. Officers explained that there was another scheme in the pipeline on Histon Road in Cambridge which would deliver a further four units. Officers explained that so far eight units had been completed as part of the scheme in Fordham. Officers clarified that there were no £100k homes completed that were yet to be allocated. The Chairman explained that the £100k homes scheme was not finished but alternative funding sources were being sought.

It was resolved by majority to;

- a) Note the update provided in this report.
- b) Approve amendments to the £100K Homes Allocations Policy.

## 155. Oakington Community Land Trust - Start Up Grant Application

The Committee considered a report that sought approval for funding of £5,000 to Oakington Community Land Trust under the Community land Trust Start Up Grant Fund.

Introducing the report officers explained that the emerging Community Land Trust group were committed to providing affordable homes for older members of the community in housing need, as well as providing, managing and safeguarding other community facilities and amenities such as open green space for wider community benefit.

It was resolved unanimously to

- a) Approve the award of £5,000 to Oakington CLT under the CLT Start-up Grant Fund.

### Part 3 – Date of the next meeting

156. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as Monday 21 June 2021.