



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 3.1

Implementation Update of the revised Affordable Housing Programme

To:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
Meeting Date:	29 September 2021
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Councillor Lewis Herbert, Lead Member for Housing
From:	Roger Thompson, Director of Housing and Development
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	n/a
Recommendations:	The Combined Authority Board is recommended 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.
Voting arrangements:	Note only item, no vote required.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This matter was last considered at the Board meeting on 30th June 2021. Following discussion, the Board agreed to approve the proposals from MHCLG and we have been awaiting the response from the minister and MHCLG to our proposed 2021/22 affordable housing programme.
- 1.2 A response from the minister has now been received along with a meeting between MHCLG and CPCA officers which took place on the 10th September 2021. The Ministers letter is shown in Appendix 3.
- 1.3 This report is to update the Board on that response, the implications for the revised Affordable housing programme for the period April 2021 to March 2022 and potential implications for the CPCA for its housing activity from April 2022 onwards.

2. Background CPCA programme & changes by MHCLG – Programme April 2021 to March 2022

- 2.1. The Combined Authority's Affordable Housing programme was running for five years from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 with the ambition to deliver a minimum of 2,000 new affordable homes with £100m of funding.
- 2.2. MHCLG determined that the programme in its previous form ended with effect from 31st March 2021. MHCLG offered a new programme of support for additional affordable housing for the period April 2021 to March 2022 with conditions that the CPCA has accepted. The CPCA's response to the conditions is listed below:
 - CPCA will invest all returning capital from its portfolio of 5 loans to local SME developers into the proposed grant programme as that capital is re-paid to CPCA. It will be solely used to support grant schemes that will maximise additional starts of affordable housing by 31 March 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter. Where loan funding will not be returned in time to invest into schemes starting by 31st March 2022, CPCA will still use such funds to support additional affordable housing grant payments that will become due after March 2022.
 - The schemes in the programme for 2021/22 will first be funded from the £55m already provided by MHCLG, except where funding is already out on loan and will not have been re-paid by 31st March 2022.
 - CPCA will only request additional funding above the £55m already received for unfunded schemes that will both deliver additional starts by 31 March 2022 and be able to demonstrate and work to an intervention rate to be capped on any one scheme at a maximum average grant rate of £45,000 per unit.
 - CPCA is prepared to provide evidence on a scheme by scheme basis as required by MHCLG of meeting the Homes England definition of Additionality, confirm the grant rate and start on site date in advance of payment being received from MHCLG.
 - In order to manage the programme, CPCA has suggested a monthly or quarterly

update with summary report, including an update of the programme cashflow projection showing and capturing the actuals against the projections and also updating the projections as the delivery of the various projects progress and capital is returned from the CPCA loan book. This will identify the amount of new money required by CPCA from MHCLG on a 'forward look' throughout the next 12 months to ensure that CPCA has access to adequate funds to meet its anticipated immediate and medium term projected cash commitments between now, March 2022 and phased grant payments that will still be due for payment by CPCA beyond that date. The frequency of these meetings will be determined by MHCLG's requirements, although we see limited benefit in them being more frequent than monthly. Those reports and meeting minutes will act as milestones to ensure transparency supporting local and central accountability.

- For the avoidance of any doubt, upon the re-payment of the existing loan book, no money allocated to this affordable housing programme will be used for any future loans or revolving fund purposes.

- 2.3. The programme will continue to support a mixed portfolio of schemes including strategic sites and projects brought forward by housing associations, developers and Community Land Trusts (CLTs). The new programme only proposes the intended use of grant to enable the delivery of additional affordable housing.
- 2.4 We have now received the Ministers decision on what the Minister and MHCLG are prepared to financially support from the proposed CPCA 2021/22 affordable housing programme. His Letter is shown in Appendix 3.
- 2.5 Effectively the Minister is prepared to support the 15 schemes at the top of the schedule in appendix 2 listed as 'CPCA Housing Committee Approved Schemes 2021/22' and the 3 schemes identified as 'Certain pipeline for 2021/22 to June Housing Committee'. He has not been prepared to support the 5 schemes at the bottom of the schedule listed as 'Further proposed pipeline 21/22'.
- 2.6 The total number of units for 2021/22 being supported is therefore 1,188 and the minister is approving an additional £18.704m of capital funding above the £55m already received under the previous programme. The net effect is that CPCA will receive £73.704m of the originally intended £100m to support the delivery of additional affordable housing in the period up to 31st March 2022.
- 2.7 Having not had the certainty until now of knowing what the minister was prepared to support, we are now reviewing with our delivery partners and providers if any schemes are not going to be capable of delivery to the required timescale, having found ourselves already 5 months into the 12 month programme. It appears so far that six of the smaller schemes will not be able to progress to start on site by 31st March 2022. These have been shaded in pink in Appendix 2. Those schemes total 187 units and account for appx £7.4m of funding.
- 2.8 MHCLG have made it clear that there is no prospect of delivery deadlines being extended. Anticipating this potential situation we had requested an ability from MHCLG to 'substitute' schemes out of the programme if they looked like that could not start in time and where possible to replace them with schemes that could start on site by 31st March 2022. It is not yet clear how many substitute schemes we can find, but we are hoping for at least 2

schemes that will return appx 78 units to the 2021/22 programme. Any proposed substitutions will be subject to a process and approval from MHCLG and they will apply the following criteria;

- Ideally, the above schemes should be progressed if possible. CLGU expect that scheme substitution would only be proposed in exceptional circumstances.
- should a scheme become undeliverable CPCA must raise this with CLGU in the first instance. Details of any schemes that may be available for substitution should be provided.
- To be considered, any substitute scheme/s would have to be of the same or lesser value and be capable of delivery in line with the same conditions included in the Minister's March letter, including starting on site by end March 2022.
- It is important to recognise that there are no guarantees any substitute scheme would be accepted and may need ministerial approval.
- If substitutions are agreed, it is important to recognise that the March 2022 end date is not moveable and there is no possibility of the funding being increased.

2.9 MHCLG have advised that they are not prepared to let CPCA 'set off' the overhead of their Housing Directorate team against the capital funding being provided for the 2021/22 affordable housing programme. Team costs will therefore be a direct overhead to CPCA.

Affordable Housing Programme Delivery

2.10. The 'original' Affordable Housing Programme that ended 31st March 2021 has 37 schemes with allocated funding, totalling 733 housing units stated on site with 305 of those homes now completed. See Appendix 1

2.11. The schemes in the 'original' programme have £26.1m of grant committed to them and include the 5 loan schemes originally intended to be part of a revolving fund.

2.12. For the Affordable housing programme in its new form for the period April 2021 to March 2022 we have 18 potential schemes delivering 1,188 units to be supported and financed with £18.7m of additional grant funding.

2.13. The anticipated additional affordable housing unit numbers being delivered for the original period March 2017 to March 2022 is expected to be appx 1,812 units. (calculation; 733 original programme + 1,188 2021/22 programme - 187 not starting + 78 substitutes). Assuming £69.4m of funding is used (£73.7 less £4.3m not substituted), the average grant subsidy per unit will be £38,300.

2.14. Two schemes comprising 111 additional affordable housing units in the 2021/22 affordable housing programme have already started on site.

Prospects beyond March 2022

2.15 MHCLG advised that in connection with any prospect for the Combined Authority having a further dedicated affordable housing programme beyond March 2022 there is no

expectation of there being any additional MHCLG money available that could provide a funding source. We were also advised that MHCLG had no current Affordable Housing funding support planned for Combined Authorities and no intention to take money away from national programmes to support Combined Authorities.

- 2.16. We were referred to a Continuous Market Engagement process and to engage a discussion with Homes England as they still have £2.9 billion unallocated money in their 2021/26 housing programme. This would only be on a scheme or site specific basis.
- 2.17. In light of the MHCLG response, it is proposed to put current work on the CA Affordable Housing Principles on hold and to look to see if with the recent change of minister there is any opportunity to revisit a future proposal to Government for post March 2022 affordable housing funding or any other opportunities to secure funding.
- 2.18. Recognising that the affordable housing challenge remains severe in all CA districts, once the core of the remaining 2021/22 delivery is underway, the CA housing team will engage with Councils and with Registered Providers (RPs) to see if there are any specific schemes to present through a market engagement process with Homes England.
- 2.19 Without a funding source it is probably fair to say that the prospects for the Combined Authority significantly engaging and influencing the local affordable housing market beyond March 2022 are severely limited.

3. Financial Implications & Loan Book Performance

- 3.1 MHCLG indicated that we can expect to receive the first payment of the additional capital funding in the form of appx £2m in October 2021. The balance of the £18.7m will be released subject to MHCLG's monitoring of the CPCA's performance in the delivery of the programme.
- 3.2 Financial implications are covered in the body of the report below. Appendix 1 shows the amount of money committed to the March 2021 programme and the amount of money actually paid to date.
- 3.3. Grant investment approved for Affordable Housing schemes to 31st March 2021 is £26.1million, with a further £51.1 million approved for the 5 loan portfolio book.
- 3.4. £13.217 million in grant and £39.507 million in loan has been paid to date. As the Combined Authority is its own accountable body for the purposes of its funding from Treasury, every payment made to schemes must be capable of being scrutinised by independent auditors. We have set up as simple a process as we can for providers to supply supporting evidence of project expenditure and delivery milestones having been met to enable prompt payments.
- 3.5. 4 of the 5 loans in the loan book are proceeding in line with the revised Covid-19 impact delivery programmes as advised and approved by the Board on 5th August 2020. (the loans are listed on the bottom table in Appendix 1).
- 3.6 The exception is the ECTC loan on the MOD site at Ely where the projected repayment profile is slipping behind that anticipated. This is for two reasons. There has been a delay in the sale of the 15 affordable housing units in the scheme. We are advised that this is

expected to be resolved and the substantial capital payment received from the sale of those units before the next housing committee meeting. We will continue to monitor the progress of that transaction. The second reason is a slower than projected rate of sale of the market units over the past 6 months. The loan is due to be re-paid by no later than 31st March 2023 and we will continue to monitor ECTC's performance closely to meet that deadline. There are currently 7 market units reserved and going through the acquisition process. Of those, 1 has exchanged and 4 market sale units are expected to complete in the next 3-4 weeks. Receipts from those will help bring the anticipated repayment profile back towards what was projected. For the avoidance of any doubt ECTC are not defaulting on the loan. A default will only occur if the loan is not re-paid in full by 31st March 2023. We will continue to monitor and report to Housing Committee on the progress of the repayments.

- 3.7. Repayments are being received from the schemes at Haddenham, MOD Ely and Great Abingdon as market and affordable rental sales complete. We expect more payments in the next few weeks and months as market unit sales are progressing towards completion, particularly on the schemes being developed by Laragh homes at Great Abingdon and Forehill, Ely as those schemes reach practical completion. Confidence of the return of capital and interest on all 3 of the above is good.
- 3.8. The Laragh Homes scheme at Great Abingdon due for practical completion in November 2021 has announced that all of the private sale houses have been reserved "off plan", most have now exchanged and the first completion has happened.
- 3.9. The Laragh Homes scheme at Forehill Ely has announced many units being reserved off plan and exchanged. Completion is expected in December 2021.
- 3.10. The scheme at Linton Road, Cambridge is not yet at a stage where units are nearing completion for unit sales and loan repayments to be made. The contractor has reported some labour shortage issues and is seeking to resolve this. There is a 2 month delay being reported to the target practical completion date, now projected as being December 2022.
- 3.11 In view of the lack of support for the covering of the overhead of the CPCA housing team from April 2021 by MHCLG and the uncertainty about the likelihood of their being any funded housing programme beyond March 2022, CPCA should review the resourcing of the housing directorate based on the likely future workload and funding. The budgeted recharge of staffing and other overheads to the housing programme in 2021/22 is c £595k.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no new implications. The obligations within the devolution deal require the Combined Authority to ensure the funds are spent in line with its Assurance and Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.
- 4.2. The Combined Authority has authority under section 1 Localism Act 2011 to exercise a general power of competence. The Combined Authority can exercise this power by virtue of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017. This power permits the Combined Authority to make grants to providers in order to deliver the terms of the Devolution Deal signed with Government.

5. Other Significant Implications

5.1 There are no other significant implications.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – Combined Authority Affordable Housing Programme - Approved and Started on Site Schemes to March 2021

6.2 Appendix 2 - Proposed Combined Authority 2021/22 Housing Programme

6.3 Appendix 3 - Ministers letter from Luke Hall MP Dated 3rd September 2021

7. Background Papers

7.1 [Combined Authority Board 5 August 2020](#)

7.2 [Combined Authority Board 30 June 2021](#)