



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Housing and Communities Committee Decision Summary

Meeting: Monday 10 January 2022

Present:

Councillor David Ambrose - Smith - East Cambridgeshire District Council
Councillor Lewis Herbert - Chair and Member for Cambridge City Council
Councillor John Howard - Peterborough City Council
Councillor Jon Neish - Huntingdonshire District Council
Councillor Alison Whelan - Cambridgeshire County

Apologies:

Councillor Steve Allen - Peterborough City Council
Councillor John Batchelor - South Cambridgeshire District Council
Councillor Ryan Fuller - Huntingdonshire District Council
Councillor Dee Laws - Fenland District Council

Part 1 - Governance Items

35. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest and Announcements

Apologies received from Councillor Steve Allen (substituted by Councillor John Howard), Councillor John Batchelor, Councillor Ryan Fuller (substituted by Councillor Jon Neish) and Councillor Dee Laws.

Councillor Lewis Herbert declared an interest in item 3.2 (i) on the agenda as his partner was a Board Member for Cross Key Homes.

Councillor Herbert welcomed the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority, Eileen Milner to the meeting as she had joined virtually.

The Chair announced that item 3.2 (ii), '2021-22 Affordable Housing Programme Land at Potten End, Eltisley' had been removed from the as the substitution request has been rejected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). DLUHC had explained that having reviewed the information within the change request form provided by officers, and noting the significant increase in intervention rate for the Potten End scheme above that typically seen within this programme, they did not consider there to be a compelling case to make an exception to the conditions of the programme in this instance and therefore were not able to accept the substitution request.

36. Minutes of the Housing and Communities Committee meeting on 3 November 2021 and Actions

The minutes of the meeting on 3 November 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

The action log was noted.

37. Public Questions

No public questions were received.

38. Housing and Communities Committee Agenda Plan

It was resolved to note the agenda plan.

39. Combined Authority Forward Plan

It was resolved to note the Forward Plan.

Part 2 – Recommendations to the Combined Authority Board

40. Digital Connectivity Strategy 2022-25 Business Case

The Committee received a report outlining the Digital Connectivity Business Case for 2021-2025 and the associated budget of £4.5 million in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Discussing the report Members;

- Queried whether the roll out of Public Access Wi-Fi to Village Halls and Community Centres, as part of the Access and Inclusion Workstream, could be accelerated. Officers explained that currently Public Access Wi-Fi had been rolled out to 40 village halls using funding from health to support health outcomes. Officers explained that more funding would be required to accelerate the roll out and this was a complex area. The Chair requested an update on the roll out in the next Digital Connectivity report to Committee.
ACTION

- Sought an update on any progress on the roll out of 5g. Officers stated that there had been a further email discussion with Members since the last Committee and that there would be a more detailed session organised in the spring to enable further detailed discussions with specialist support.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend to the Combined Authority Board the approval of the Digital Connectivity Business Case, included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- b) Recommend to the Combined Authority Board approval of £4.5m budget from the subject to approval line in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25.

41. Community Housing Strategy

The Committee considered a report that outlined the proposed Community Homes Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Introducing the report officers explained that the strategy, subject to approval from Committee, would be incorporated as part of a report on the 'Future Combined Authority Housing Purpose and Function beyond March 2022', which would go to the Combined Authority Board for approval in March 2022.

Officers highlighted that staff from the Community Homes team left the Combined Authority in August and September 2021, and it had since been identified that support services for community lead housing projects could be provided to an equivalent or better standard externally by Eastern Community Homes (ECH) who specialised in supporting community homes groups across Eastern England. Officers stated that a procurement waiver had been obtained on the basis that ECH were a sole supplier and that the waiver provided authority to appoint ECH to provide support to Community Homes groups across the majority of the Combined Authority's area from November 2022 to April 2023. Officers clarified that the arrangement would exclude East Cambridgeshire where groups would be supported locally by East Cambridgeshire District Council.

In discussing the report Members;

- Queried how the Community Start Up Grants would be funded. Officers explained that the funding of £70,000 was built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan and that the agreement with ECH ran until April 2023 and would then be reviewed.
- Questioned what types of support would be provided through ECH and whether the Combined Authority were just acting as an intermediary and what the cost to the Combined Authority was for the service. The Director of Housing and Development stated that ECH were specialist providers that could signpost applicants to funding sources and networking opportunities. He stated that ECH did not give grants out themselves but would support applicants to complete their applications that would then come to Housing and Communities Committee for approval. He explained that ECH would provide, expert, independent advice and the cost for this service was £31,000 up until April 2023. He clarified that the Community Housing Strategy would be considered as part of the overall review of the Combined Authorities future Housing Strategy.

- Highlighted that it was crucial not to disenfranchise the constituent councils and that good working relationships and links needed to be maintained in relation to Community Housing. The Director of Housing and Development stated that for any application there would be consultation with the relevant local authority housing team.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend the Combined Authority's Board approves the Community Homes Strategy.

Part 3 - Programme Delivery

42. Implementation Update of the 2021-22 Affordable Housing Programme

The Committee received a report that gave an update on the implications for the revised Affordable housing programme for the period April 2021 to March 2022 and potential implications for the Combined Authority for its housing activity from April 2022 onwards.

Introducing the report the Director of Housing and Development updated the Committee on a number of points including:

- The final number of units for the 2021-22 programme was 840 units.
- The Wisbech Road, Littleport Scheme had been removed from the programme as it needed to go back through the planning process.
- A further seven schemes were due to start on site by the end of March 2022.
- Planning consent had been received for the Northminster Scheme and there was now putting plans in place to ensure a start on site by March 2022.
- Value for money data requested at the last meeting had been included in appendix 4 of the report.
- The loan on the scheme at Great Abingdon with Laragh Homes had finished and the loan has been re-paid in full with interest due. 3 of the other 4 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.

Concluding his introduction, the Director of Housing and Development drew the Committees attention to the email that had been circulated on 6 January that asked them to note that based upon information received from Laragh Homes that week, the loan was now not likely to be re-paid by 7th February 2022. He explained that a

report requesting a short extension to the term of the loan, probably to 7th May 2022 because of exceptional covid construction impact issues, would be going to Combined Authority Board. He stated that this was resulting from Laragh encountering significant issues with contractor and sub-contractor resourcing from December onwards due to the latest Omnicom covid outbreak. Specifically, that no works had yet re-started on site in January 2022 due to issues with crews having enough manpower resource to attend site and also critical material delays now being incurred that would prevent completion of the sale of the apartments on the upper floors before 7th February 2022.

Discussing the report Members:

- Discussed the position of the outstanding loans detailed on pages 107-108 of the agenda pack and queried if there were any concerns on cashflow that would cause problems in the near future. The Chair welcomed the detailed breakdown of the loans given in the report and that the loan repayments would need to be considered in the overall Housing Strategy going forward. The Director of Housing and Development stated that a significant amount of income was due in the next four weeks from the ECTC Schemes at Haddenham and the MOD Ely site . He highlighted that there would be a pinch point at the end of February, beginning of March if the Forehill, Ely money was not received. He stated however the draw-down of grants tended to be slow by developers and that the gap would not be a significant figure and there was financial capacity to cover the gap in the short term.
- Queried the position of the seven schemes that were due to start on site and if it was realistic that they would all go ahead by the end of March 2022. The Director of Housing and Development stated that the timescales were challenging particularly as they had only been given six months in which to ensure that the schemes started on site. He explained that it was a dynamic industry and that officers were as up to date as they could be with the position of all of the schemes. He explained that contractors were highly motivated to get starts on site as they would not get the grant funding if starts were unsuccessful. A Member raised concerns in relation to the shared ownership properties on the MOD site in Ely, as individuals had signed up to these properties in July-August 2020 and they had not yet been handed over. She queried whether there were any contingency plans in relation to alternative funding. The Director of Housing and Development explained that they had received an update before Christmas that it was expected to be resolved and the substantial capital payment received from the sale of those units now before end January 2022 and that officers continued to monitor the progress of that transaction. The Chair requested an update from the Director of Housing and Development on the position as soon as it was known.**ACTION.**

In concluding the debate the Chair sought a more in-depth update on the outstanding projects in the March report to Committee.**ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress in delivering the CPCA 2021/22 Affordable Housing Programme.

43. 2021-22 Affordable Housing Programme Great Haddon, Off London Road, Yaxley, Peterborough

The Committee considered a report which sought commitment of grant funding of £1,886,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 49 new affordable homes at Great Haddon in Yaxley, Peterborough. The report was a revised version of the previous decision made at Committee and saw the number of units reduced down to 49.

Introducing the report officers explained that the report that Cross Key Homes were looking to deliver 49 homes for Affordable provision by way of additionality (tenure conversion from Market Sale), subject to the successful application for grant assistance from the Combined Authority. Officers stated that Countryside Properties would be Cross Key Home's development partner, and the scheme would be delivered by way of a development agreement for a fixed sum. Officers explained that the grant was lower than previously requested at £1,886,500 for 49 shared ownership homes, but in line with the new shared ownership leasing model which came into effect in April 2021. Officers also stated that costs had increased due to this fact, whereby repair costs were incurred for the first 10 years by the Registered provider, and additional costs incurred for the management of staircasing for the shared ownership units. Officers highlighted that the Housing Enabling Officer at Peterborough was aware of the situation.

Discussing the report Members

- Raised concerns in relation to the space standards set out in 2.8 of the report as some units were below the national space standard guidelines. Members requested that the new Housing strategy considered the standards as part of its guidelines going forward. The Director of Housing and Development stated that they had rejected any units that were under 85% as this was in line with Homes England and he ensured Members that the space standards would form part of the revised Housing Strategy going forwards.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Committing grant funding of £1,886,500 from the £100m Affordable Housing programme to enable delivery of 49 additional new affordable homes.

Part 4 – Date of the next meeting

44. It was resolved to:

Note the date of the next meeting as 9 March 2022.