

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 March 2017

5.30 - 7.45 pm

Present: Councillors Todd-Jones (Chair), Bird (Vice-Chair), Avery, Gawthrop, Holland, R. Moore, Page-Croft and Smart

Executive Councillors: Price (Executive Councillor for Housing)

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives: Diane Best, Lulu Agate, Kay Harris, John Marais and Mandy Powell-Hardy

Officers:

Strategic Director: Suzanne McBride

Strategic Advisor - Housing and Welfare Reform: Liz Bisset

Head of Housing Services: Tom Bremner

Head of Estates & Facilities: Trevor Burdon

Resident involvement Officer: James Bull

Housing Strategy Manager: Helen Reed

Managing Director, Housing Development Agency Alan Carter

Empty Homes Officer: Danae Evans

Environmental Health Officer: Claire Adelizzi

Committee Manager: Toni Birkin

| |
|---|
| FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL |
|---|

17/11/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Tenant representative Diana Minns.

17/12/HSC Declarations of Interest

| Name | Item | Interest |
|------------------------|-------------|---|
| Councillor Gawthrop | 17/17/HSC | Personal: parents live in an area where new housing may be built. |
| Leaseholder | 17/21/HSC | Personal: As a leaseholder she |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| representative: Diane Best | | would be subject to the new policy. |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|

17/13/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record subject to minor corrections and will be signed by the Chair outside the meeting.

17/14/HSC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

Change to published agenda order

Under paragraph 4.2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, the Chair used his discretion to alter the order of the agenda items. However, for ease of the reader, these minutes will follow the order of the agenda.

Agenda Item 10 (Sale of Roof Voids to Leaseholders) was moved to Part One of the Agenda.

17/15/HSC Resident Involvement Strategy: 2017-2020

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones in the absence of the Tenant/Leaseholder Vice Chair

Matter for Decision

The Resident Involvement Strategy offered a clear outcome-based method of ensuring that Resident Involvement continues to provide an effective, value-for-money service that answers the needs of today's social housing climate.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the Resident Involvement Strategy 2017-2020

Reason for the Decision

With scarcer resources in the housing service, Resident Involvement must provide a targeted service that responds to the needs of tenants, the priorities

of the housing service and satisfies regulatory requirements. As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Resident Involvement Officer.

John Marais stated that tenants prioritised the building of new council housing. He stated that those representing Tenants and Leaseholders at this meeting should be allowed to vote on recommendations regarding future council house building.

Councillor Moore stated that elected members also represented tenants.

The Chair stated that the Executive Councillor worked with Officers to ensure that, whenever possible, report were split to allow the tenant and leaseholders to vote on a many matter as possible. Where voting was not appropriate, the Committee still valued their comments and suggestions.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/16/HSC Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The report sought approval for an Interim Housing Strategy Statement for Cambridge, prior to development of a proposed joint Housing Strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. In particular it sought approval for a vision for housing in the City, and a set of strategic aims to help achieve the proposed vision.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the aspirational vision laid out in the draft Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 (attached as Appendix A to the Officer's report), for Cambridge to be a City where:
 - a) The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy;
 - b) There is a wide and varied choice of good quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, to meet the needs of a wide range of different households;
 - c) Homes are located in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and neighbourhood facilities, appropriate green space, effective transport links and other necessary infrastructure;
 - d) Everyone has access to a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible;
 - e) People from all walks of life live in harmony, within mixed and balanced communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the needs of residents into the future;
 - f) We have strong relationships with residents, developers and partners that enable us to deliver housing and services effectively, and to innovate where appropriate.
- ii. Approved the strategic aims laid out in the draft Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 (attached as Appendix A to the Officer's report) as follows:
 - a) Work with stakeholders to accelerate the delivery of housing and infrastructure in and around Cambridge as set out in the Greater Cambridge City Deal and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Devolution Deal;
 - b) Provide, and promote provision of, good quality, energy and water efficient homes, in high quality, sustainable environments, alongside appropriate infrastructure;

- c) Ensure that new homes: are as affordable as possible; are available in a range of sizes, types and tenures, to meet a range of needs; and can support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities;
 - d) Make the best use of council land to maximise the supply of housing for those who cannot afford to access the private market;
 - e) Make and promote the best use of existing homes;
 - f) Enable people to live settled lives, within safe and healthy homes and communities;
 - g) Manage and maintain the council's homes and estates in a cost-effective way, protecting core services, balancing the budget, and operating within our means;
 - h) Promote a well-regulated, fair, good quality private rented sector, and support the provision of longer and more settled tenancies;
 - i) Recognise links between health, social care & housing, and work positively with partner organisations to promote and improve quality of life and health and well-being for those most in need;
 - j) Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping;
 - k) Minimise use of temporary accommodation and maximise access to longer term housing solutions;
 - l) Enable people to make informed choices about their housing;
 - m) Promote sustained and settled lifestyles and minimise social exclusion.
- iii. Noted the ongoing and emerging actions being pursued with partners to achieve the vision and strategic aims proposed in the Interim Housing Strategy Statement, attached as Appendix A to the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Strategy Manager.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Suggested that the report was aspirational but lacked tangible targets.
- ii. Welcomed the vision within the documents.

The Strategic Director and the Housing Strategy Manager stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The report was intentionally an aspirational framework pulling together various work strands. Subsequent reports would provide the measurable detail.
- ii. Any significant changes would be brought back to this committee for discussion.
- iii. The Strategy was an interim measure prior to more detail emerging around government policy, and Cambridge City & South Cambridgeshire District Councils developing a joint Housing Strategy. Confirmed that other social housing providers also offered intermediate and other, below market price, housing products.
- iv. Both the needs of older people, and those of younger people with disabilities, were included in the recommendations.
- v. Expressed support for the continued delivery of support for the vulnerable to allowed them to live as independently as possible.

Diane Best requested a correction as following, struck through replaced with bold:

In terms of issues relating to council housing, tenant and leasehold representatives scrutinise both services and key decisions: as service inspectors; ~~through a Housing Regulation Panel; and as members of the council's Housing Management Board~~ **through a Housing Regulation Panel; and as representatives on the council's Housing Scrutiny Committee.**

This was agreed *nem com*.

Councillor Holland sought clarification on the provision of housing for older people. She asked if recommendations from a recent Local Government Association paper on housing had been addressed by this report.

Alan Carter responded and stated that the City Council was delivering housing for the over 50s within general needs housing stock with the aim of offering an attractive alternative that would tempt downsizing from family housing. This approach was recommended by the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) report.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

17/17/HSC New Housing by the Council

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The advent of the Devolution Agreement means that the Council could consider building new Council housing again. The report sought endorsement of the housing dimension of the Devolution Agreement and set out the development framework within which the Council would provide new housing itself. It also provided details of the current delivery programme for using Devolution Housing Grant over the following two years. The Council's approach to the involvement of residents in the process was refreshed as was the Council's Home Loss Policy.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution New Homes Business Case 20.1.17 Draft Version 10 at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.
- ii. Approved the Council's approach to the development of new Council housing as shown in the paper at Appendix 2 of the Officer's report.
- iii. Approved the 'Commitment to Resident Involvement'.
- iv. Noted the current delivery programme for using Devolution Housing Grant in Cambridge over the next two years as shown in Appendix 3 of the Officer's report.
- v. Re-approved the Home Loss Policy at Appendix 5 of the Officer's report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Managing Director, Housing Development Agency.

A correction to the text of the confidential document was tabled and noted.

Councillor Todd-Jones proposed an amendment to the recommendations recommendation A. as follows (struck through replaced with bold):

- A. ~~Endorse~~ **Note** the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution New Homes Business Case 20.1.17 Draft Version 10 at Appendix 1.

The Committee unanimously approved amendment to the recommendations.

The Committee resolved unanimously to endorse the recommendations as amended.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/18/HSC Council Newbuild Redevelopment - 9-10A Ventress Close Scheme Approval

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

- i. The report provided details of the proposal to redevelop the existing flats at 9-10a Ventress Close to provide up to 19 new homes.
- ii. The proposed redevelopment had indicative plans to deliver up to 19 No. new homes on the existing site, providing 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 3 bedroom houses.
- iii. The report requested approval to a capital budget for the scheme based on the outlined appraisal assuming the mix stated above.
- iv. The appraisal suggests that all of the new properties can be delivered as part of the Council's social rent programme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the indicative mix of the proposed scheme.
- ii. Approved the scheme capital budget of £4,153,000 detailed in the report to cover the construction cost of the scheme and professional fees and other costs.
- iii. Approved the commencement of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) proceedings on the remaining 2 Leaseholders at 9 and 9a Ventress Close should they be required.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Development Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Expressed concern regarding a potential compulsory purchase and hoped that this could be resolved amicably.
- ii. Noted that there were a number of infill projects appearing around Cambridge.
- iii. Such development inevitably changed neighbourhoods and the committee hoped that neighbours were being treated sympathetically.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/19/HSC Council Newbuild Redevelopment - 9-28 Anstey Way Scheme Approval

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

- i. This report provided details of the proposed redevelopment of Anstey Way Bungalows and Flats. Originally presented to Housing Scrutiny Committee in June 2015 the proposal then was for 34 No. new units. The report presented a new scheme that could accommodate up to 54 No. new council properties.
- ii. The report requested approval for a capital budget for the scheme based on the outlined appraisal assuming the mix of mainly 1, 2 and 3 bed properties.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the indicative mix of the proposed scheme.
- ii. Noted the total scheme capital budget of £10,197,000 detailed in the report to cover the construction cost of the scheme and professional fees and all other associated land assembly and decant costs.
- iii. Approved virement of the additional £3,667,000 from the unallocated new build budget, to the budget for this scheme of £6,530,000 previously

approved, recognising that this increase was expected to be funded from a mix of devolution grant and retained right to buy receipts.

- iv. Approved commencement of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) proceedings on the one remaining leaseholder at 12b Anstey Way.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Development Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Welcomed this long awaited project.
- ii. Expressed some concerns regarding the addition of a fourth floor but acknowledged that additional units were desirable.
- iii. Welcomed the inclusion of 12 units for over 55's.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/20/HSC Introduction of an Empty Homes Loan Scheme

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones

Matter for Decision

The introduction of an Empty Homes Loan was needed to help combat the ongoing problem with Empty Homes in Cambridge City. The City had in the region of 328 properties that are recorded to have been empty for over 6 Months. The Empty Homes Officer was currently investigating in the region of 70 of these properties that have been empty for longer than two years. Empty

homes were a wasted resource in terms of housing available for people to live in and they can also have a negative impact on their surrounding communities, as well as being a financial burden for many owners. Cambridge was in an area of high demand for affordable housing.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the Introduction of an interest free Empty Homes Loan Policy, with loans of up to £25,000 secured against each property, (attached as Appendix A to the Officer's report).
- ii. Approved conditions being attached to the loan meaning that the property has to be let at an affordable rent level for the minimum of two years.
- iii. Approved for the property to be let through Town Hall Lettings or another not for profit provider.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Empty Homes Officer and the Environmental Health Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Suggested that whilst this was a good idea, the legal requirements would need careful consideration to avoid future problems such as loss of income capital.
- ii. Expressed some doubts about the level of take up.

The Empty Homes Officer and the Environmental Health Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Property owners would pay a management fee to Town Hall Lettings.
- ii. There would be separate legal agreements with the tenant and the property owner.
- iii. Should a property require more than the maximum loan amount (£25,000), a top up from the applicant was permitted.

- iv. The budget would be recycled to provide more loans as the first round of loans was repaid.
- v. It was hoped that owners would retain the management agreement with Town Hall Lettings once the initial two year period had elapsed.
- vi. A charge would be placed against the property to protect the repayment of the loan.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/21/HSC Sale of Roof Voids (and Other Property) to Leaseholders

This Item was chaired by Councillor Todd-Jones in the absence of the Tenant/Leaseholder Vice Chair

Matter for Decision

This update report looked at the issues that had arisen following the decision in March 2011 by the Housing Management Board to agree to the potential sale of roof voids to leaseholders. The report proposed reversing the decision to prevent the future sale of roof voids.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the continued exclusion of the roof void from the Right to Buy sale of leasehold flats.
- ii. Approved the recommendation to no longer agree to the sale of roof voids to leaseholders.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Estates & Facilities.

The Committee welcomed the report.

The Head of Estates & Facilities stated the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Very few roof voids had been sold.
- ii. No voids had been sold at the time of the right to buy purchase and therefore it was not possible to access the impact on property values.
- iii. There was no information available regarding conversions of roof spaces into living spaces. Such issues would be covered by planning and building regulations.
- iv. It was not possible to monitor any conversion of a roof void that had taken place without permission.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

CHAIR