

# Public Document Pack

Housing Scrutiny Committee

HSC/1

Tuesday, 17 September 2024

## HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 September 2024

5.30 - 8.46 pm

**Present:** Councillors Griffin (Chair), Robertson (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Gawthrop Wood, Lee, Martinelli, Swift, Tong and Pounds

Executive Councillor: Bird (Executive Councillor for Housing)

**Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:** Diana Minns (Vice Chair), Diane Best, Harmony Birch and Mandy Powell-Hardy

Also present (virtually) Executive Councillor Holloway (Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing)

### Officers present in person:

Head of Finance and Business Manager: Julia Hovells

Director, Communities Group: Sam Scharf

Assistant Director, Development: Ben Binns

Committee Manager: Sarah Steed

Meeting Producer: Dan Kalley

### Officers present virtually:

Strategic Delivery Manager (Operational Delivery): Sean Cleary

Housing Services Manager: Laura Adcock

## FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

### 24/34/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Thittala and Councillor Pounds attended as alternate.

Councillor Lee provided apologies for lateness.

Justyna Ulman-Jaworska Tenant Representative provided apologies.

### 24/35/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Robertson	24/46/HSC	Personal: Had family who lived in Davy Road.
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge

		Cycling Campaign.
Councillor Tong	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign.
Councillor Gawthroe Wood	24/40/HSC	Personal: Rented a garage in Arbury.

## 24/36/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 24/37/HSC Public Questions

### Question 1.

We are the Save Ekin Road community group, and we are writing to you regarding Cambridge City Council's plans for Ekin Road. We are a group of council tenants and freehold residents living on Ekin Road. As done in the past, we wish to express our concerns regarding the investigation work and upcoming development of our estate.

We note Agenda Item 10 of this meeting, where it is noted that the Ekin Road project has now been added to the Housing Delivery Programme, following the decision by the Council at HSC on 18 June 2024. However, no further details as to the design, layout, or construction stages on the estate have been provided to residents since then.

We welcome the redevelopment of the flats on Ekin Road. We welcome the fact that emergency Home-Link banding has been given for those council tenants, several of whom have already found new housing. And we welcome the rehousing prioritisation of tenants whose living conditions are the worst on the estate, and hope that those worst-affected can be rehoused before the onset of winter.

However, although we welcome the retention of the 14 houses on the southern edge of the estate, we maintain that this does not go far enough. We continue to advocate for the retention of the 6 houses in the north-east corner, so as to preserve the health and wellbeing of those living in them who continue to express a strong desire to stay.

We are also concerned that, as rehousing progresses for residents on the estate, there is an increasing number of void properties. This could lead to the

estate giving the appearance of being abandoned, which may attract anti-social behaviour and is thus a concern for both those residents whose homes are being retained, and those who might not be rehoused for many more months.

Having reviewed the current status of the development project, and having consulted our members, we now wish to make the following three requests to the Council, which we believe are reasonable and justified, with reasons to follow below:

### **Request 1**

We *again* request that the 6 semi-detached houses in the north-east corner of the estate (odd numbers 13-23 inclusive) be retained in the redevelopment of Ekin Road, in addition to those 14 houses on the southern edge of the estate (odd numbers 33-59).

### **Request 2:**

We request that the Council provide the number of households in the redevelopment area who have reported damp and mould issues in the past 2 years but have yet to be rehoused, and to provide a clear outline of how it intends to rehouse these residents before the onset of winter.

### **Request 3**

We request that the Council provide a plan for dealing with the vacated dwellings, outlining if any will be used for temporary housing and the criteria for deciding which, and what will be done with dwellings that are not to be used for further housing, including how they will be made secure while vacant.

Our reasons for Request 1 are as follows:

- The majority of the residents in those houses have expressed a **strong desire to keep their homes**, and some have been in theirs for over 40 years. These are well-loved family homes, and there are no intrinsic reasons to take them down.
- Several of the residents in those houses have **physical, or mental, health issues, for which their house is their lifeline**. To forcibly remove them from their home will substantially reduce their quality of life, in ways that, for many, will be irreversible. We will not articulate their (very personal) circumstances here; the Council has already been made aware directly from them, in a meeting as recently as last week.
- There is a **strong sense of community** even within those 6 houses. Many residents are very close, and have been family friends for decades. There is also a community connection to the remainder of the

estate, with some of those residents having relatives who live in the retained 14 houses on the southern edge of the estate.

- Our full analysis (available at [x.com/SaveEkinRoad/status/1805253143019630612](https://www.x.com/SaveEkinRoad/status/1805253143019630612)) of the Council's current documentation for the project, shows that the Council will suffer a **net loss of homes in its housing stock** as a result of demolishing these 6 houses.
- We are aware of **various protected species** which live in the gardens of the houses in the north-east corner, whose habitats would be destroyed if those houses are demolished.
- There has to date been **no compelling reason given by the Council** for including those 6 houses in the project. All the main aims of the project can be achieved without the demolition of these houses.

Our reasons for Request 2 are as follows:

- One of the main reasons given by the Council for proceeding with this project, and one of the reasons so many residents supported it, was that it was put forward as **a way to rehouse those living in dreadful housing**. If that cannot be achieved in a timely manner, then it **undermines the entire basis for the project**.
- The worst period for damp and mould is over the colder months, and so the Council should aim for that as a final deadline for rehousing those affected residents, so as to **avoid them suffering through yet another winter cycle of damp and mould**.
- The 6 months between the HSC vote in June and the onset of winter in December should be ample time to find new housing for those affected households. If that deadline cannot be met, then the council **should not have relied on a redevelopment project to secure adequate rehousing**, and should have instead or concurrently explored other remedial strategies.

Our reasons for Request 3 are as follows:

- As well as being informed of what the end outcome for the estate will be, current residents should be kept up to date with how the street will evolve leading up to construction. It is ultimately these residents who will **need to live on the street in those intervening months**.
- The Council needs measures to deal with any untoward activities arising from having a high vacancy rate on the estate. Residents have the **right to live in a safe and secure environment**, and should not be put at risk because of a project being carried out by the Council.
- If the Council could maintain an up-to-date list of which dwellings have been made permanently void, then this would **enable remaining**

**residents to point out any vandalism or break-ins** that may otherwise go unreported.

We make these suggestions to you, the Council, to guide the project towards an outcome that we can all support, and a process that is both fair and reasonable for all those impacted. With the design changes outlined in Request 1, and the execution steps outlined in Requests 2 and 3, this might become a project that our group can openly support. Unfortunately, as things currently stand, it remains not.

Kind regards,  
Save Ekin Road

Executive Councillor response:

- i. Details of the latest proposals to redevelop Ekin Road would be available at the public event on 1 October 2024 at Barnwell Baptist Church. Residents and the local community are invited to look at the plans and speak with the design team.
- ii. As the design has evolved it has become clear that the initial decision to include the six houses is the right approach. This is consistent with what was said at Housing Scrutiny Committee in June 2024 and to the residents at the Liaison Group meeting in the same month. To avoid creating false expectation to residents, it is important to make clear that the planning application will include the redevelopment of 108 homes at Ekin Rd including the six houses to the east.
- iii. There were 28 reported cases of damp, condensation and mould (DCM) on the estate. We expect there to be further low-level cases of DCM where residents have chosen not to report this to the Council. Of the 28 reported cases, 8 of these had now moved and 4 were in the process of moving. The Council's Regeneration Policy gives priority to households where DCM had been reported. All tenants should be reassured that each case is considered carefully by Officers before a property is allocated.
- iv. Encouraged all tenants to continue bidding on properties using Homelink and to report any DCM concerns to the Council for further investigation.
- v. Void properties would be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. When temporary accommodation was not suitable due to the condition of the property, the council may take the decision to keep a property as a void until redevelopment. When a block or house was empty, it would be secured with hoarding.

Supplementary question:

- i. Expressed concern about properties becoming void on the estate and asked the Council to ensure when this happens that the estate is properly maintained.
- ii. Urged the Council to rehouse the people in the 16 properties which still had DCM before Christmas.
- iii. Stated that the residents in the 6 properties to the northeast of the Ekin Road estate had difficult personal circumstances and maintained that these houses should not be redeveloped as it would cause harm to the residents. Believed that no compelling explanation had been given as to why these houses needed to be redeveloped.

Executive Councillor response:

- i. Had met with Save Ekin Road Group and had also met with some of the tenants from the northeast corner to explain what was happening.
- ii. Had encouraged the residents to keep in contact with Officers.

Assistant Director (Development):

- i. Officers would continue to work with all tenants on the Ekin Road estate including those in the northeast corner.
- ii. Progress had been made in terms of interactions with tenants and leaseholders. Encouraged tenants who had not contacted officers to do so, so they could understand their options moving forwards.
- iii. Noted the concerns raised regarding properties becoming void as redevelopment progressed.

Question 2.

1. On the 23rd January and subsequently on the 12th of March Cllr Bird reported that of the 72 flats damp and mouldy on Ekin Road, 2 were vacant (void works) and 70 were occupied, could she please update the meeting on how many are currently vacant and occupied.
2. Has the council performed a risk assessment of Ekin Road flat residents in receipt of a pension who may well have had their winter fuel payment withdrawn in flats which are known to be damp, mouldy and difficult to heat in winter.

Executive Councillor response:

- i. There were currently 15 properties unoccupied, comprising 14 households that had moved and 1 leasehold property that had been bought back.
- ii. The Council would not normally undertake a risk assessment of this type. However, would like to reiterate that all cases of DCM are given priority

when bids are placed on Homelink. In addition, the Council's Financial Inclusion Team works with tenants in financial hardship, and will be reporting any cases that come to our attention so that support can be provided.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Had been attending Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings for the past year asking similar questions.
- ii. Asked how many of the flats (72) were currently empty. Thought at the last meeting there were 2 vacant; thought the Executive Councillor was now saying that 15 were now vacant.
- iii. Felt there had been no progress in the last 12 months to empty these flats which had DCM.
- iv. Asked how many of the flats were occupied and vacant.

Executive Councillor response:

- i. 15 properties (flats) were unoccupied. 14 households had moved and 1 of the flats was a leaseholder.

Question 3.

I would like to ask the Executive Councillor for Housing to think about what it is like to be a leaseholder at Davy Road at the moment.

Let us first remind ourselves that leaseholders are people who have focused resources and intentions on creating a stable and long-lasting home for themselves and for their families and who contribute considerably and regularly to Cambridge City Council in terms of income.

Since this time last year the leaseholders at Davy Road have received two letters having a heavy impact on their lives:

- one letter stating that the building in which they have set up their homes is now marked for redevelopment (future demolition)
- one letter stating that they will soon be charged for repairs on that same building; charges that will cost thousands of pounds to each leaseholder.

This week we can confirm that two leaseholders received three copies of the same letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> September requesting different payments of £1664.43 and £1829.97 for the first instalment of the work.

Notwithstanding carrying out charged repairs on a site earmarked for redevelopment, the repairs themselves have caused confusion and disbelief from the leaseholders and tenants alike. The structure and stability of the blocks and the balconies appear sound and good and when asked about the

detail of the 'planned works', no detailed explanation has been given. Without proper evidence given for claiming thousands of pounds from the leaseholders for seemingly "pointless and unnecessary" repairs makes this area of the council appear dishonest in its lack of transparency.

Also there is no breakdown of the costs amounting to £1664.43 and £1829.97. The leaseholders deserve to know how these figures have been arrived at.

In the meantime, the leaseholders have no idea what the future holds for their homes and the experience is making one feel "nervous, angry and unsure what the future holds" and it is "all out of their hands."

Please could the Executive Councillor for Housing explain in detail what is the justification for these extensive works costing thousands to leaseholders at Davy Road, bearing in mind that one leaseholder works in property maintenance and knows that the explanation given is not up to standard. Also, could the Executive Councillor explain in satisfactory detail how the costs have been arrived at? Finally, please can the same Executive Councillor give more information to the leaseholders and the tenants of Davy Road on how development of this site can be justifiable given that the flats and the building are in good working order?

Executive Councillor response:

- i. Structural repairs and associated works to the flats at Davy Road were approved in January 2021 following a report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. The Council owns several blocks of flats built in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these flats have structural concrete elements that need to be repaired from time to time.
- ii. In view of the re-development proposals that were under consideration at the time, the works at Davy Road have been reduced to a minimum required to maintain the building in a safe condition.
- iii. The Council has not requested any payment towards the works. The total cost incurred by the Council has currently been split between the three blocks. However, as two blocks have 12 flats and the third block, 18 flats, the costs are divided equally between the number of flats in each block, which is why they differ.
- iv. The costs will be accurately defined per block once all works have been completed, and costs verified by the Council. A full breakdown of the costs will be available once all the works are completed on site, costs verified, and accounts signed off. The costs will be carried forward to 2024/2025 accounts to be issued in September 2025. No payment is



- expected from leaseholders this financial year for the structural works carried.
- v. As indicated in the officers' report, the standards of the existing flat blocks and maisonettes are poor and do not meet the current new build design standards. Residents were asked their views on the estate in a survey in July 2024, and the results include:
    - a. 60% of respondents said that they have damp, mould or condensation in the home.
    - b. 60% said their home is too cold in the winter.
    - c. 100% of respondents said that they have experienced anti-social behaviour at Davy Road and around half indicated dissatisfaction with the safety and security of the estate.
    - d. Accessibility - There are no level access properties and a third of respondents said that their home is not fit for their accessibility needs. Only 25% of residents agreed that the flats are fit for their wider network's needs and residents reported family members cannot visit them because of the difficult access.
  - vi. The above examples of lived experiences from residents of the estate provide a compelling argument for redevelopment. In addition to these required improvements, we will also improve water use, energy use, ventilation and air quality for residents.
  - vii. There are many people in need of a new home in the city, and by redeveloping we can significantly increase the number of homes on the site as we approach 3,000 people on the housing register.

#### Supplementary Question:

- i. Davy Road and Fanshawe Road were earmarked for redevelopment.
- ii. They lived at Fanshawe Road, and the redevelopment proposals there did not fill residents with hope.
- iii. Observed the lifelessness of the Ironworks site. The green space has been abandoned, the care of the trees and plants had not been given priority and the area resembled a car park. Referred to a news article regarding this estate.
- iv. Asked the Executive Councillor what plans would be put in place to improve the living area of the grounds so it was a priority and that the upcoming development of Fanshawe Road and Davy Road (if approved) would be carefully maintained.

#### Assistant Director (Development)

- i. Mill Road was a complex site. It wasn't just about the area being handed back to the council to adopt the open space. The area also includes management by others including a Management Company and there is a

- cycleway which wasn't completed yet which is managed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- ii. There have been problems with bollards and the Council was working to a solution with Hill, residents and the Estates and Facilities Team. A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) had been applied for to control parking.
  - iii. Each development had different requirements, and the council would take on board lessons learnt.
  - iv. It is expected that the open space on Fanshawe Road would be managed by the City Council.

## **24/38/HSC Compliance Update**

### **Matter for Decision**

The report provided an update on the compliance related activities delivered within the City Services Compliance Team, including a summary on gas, electrical, fire, lifts, legionella, asbestos and damp, condensation and mould.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted the progress of the compliance related work detailed within the 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 Strategic Delivery Manager.

The Strategic Delivery Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. In response to a query regarding personal evacuation plans, advised that officers were undertaking these with tenants where required. Information packs (which included fire evacuation procedures) were provided to tenants when they moved in, and fire procedures were attached to the back of each front door for sheltered housing tenants.
- ii. Noted concerns raised by a Tenant Representative that a fire drill hadn't been undertaken at Brandon Court and understood that one had been undertaken in August 2024. Would follow this up outside of the meeting.
- iii. Officers relied on tenants advising them about changes to their circumstances which could impact any fire evacuation arrangements.

Tenancy audits would also assist in picking up changes in tenant's circumstances.

- iv. Officers would follow up the suggestion of including an article in the Open Door magazine encouraging residents to tell the Council about any changes in their circumstances which could impact fire evacuation arrangements.
- v. The City Council was already addressing hazards (such as damp condensation and mould) within the timeframes set out in Awaab's law.
- vi. Noted concerns around gaining access to properties to undertake remedial works. Certain legislation could be used to gain access to a property to undertake remedial works.
- vii. Officer's would investigate the difference in figures contained in Appendix 1 between the June Compliance Report and this report.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

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.

### **24/39/HSC Rent Regulation Error Update Report**

#### **Matter for Decision**

The report provided an update on progress in respect of the project to recalculate and correct rents and refund any overpayment for properties affected by either of two identified rent regulation errors.

#### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted progress in respect of the correction and quantification, calculation and repayment of any overpayments resulting from the two identified rent regulation errors.

#### **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 Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

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.

## **24/40/HSC Review of Garage Charging Policy**

### **Matter for Decision**

The Housing Revenue Account managed a portfolio of 1,344 garages and 320 parking spaces, which are let as separate licences on a weekly rental basis to a variety of customers, including council housing tenants, other residents (including leaseholders) of the city, charities, businesses and commuters.

The current charging structure for garages had been in place since April 2018. It was considered timely to review the charging structure, particularly considering new garages and parking spaces available as part of the new build programme, and the introduction of a right to park in new underground parking provisions.

The revised charging structure was presented for decision by the Executive Councillor for Housing, following scrutiny and debate at Housing Scrutiny Committee, in line with the Council's constitution in respect of setting rent and service charges.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Approved the garage and parking space charging structure as outlined in Appendix A, to be implemented from April 2025, with the exception of the reduction in right to park charges for council tenants, which will be implemented from 1 October 2024.
- ii. Approved delegated authority to the Director of Communities to designate an area of garages or parking spaces as being in a high value or high demand area, therefore attracting the higher rental charge, or in a low value or low demand area and therefore attracting a lower rental charge.

**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 Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager.

An updated charging schedule (Appendix A) and an Equality Impact Assessment were published and circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

The Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted concerns raised regarding allocated parking spaces at the Ironworks site; officers would liaise with members outside of the meeting.
- ii. There was a balance to be struck when setting the garage charges. On the one hand the council did not want to lose income on the other, the rates needed to be affordable for all council tenants. The garage charges could be reviewed again in the future.
- iii. If any anti-social use of the garages arose, this would be dealt with in the same way as any other anti-social behaviour.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

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.

**24/41/HSC Review - Storage in Communal Areas - Zero Tolerance Policy / Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy****Matter for Decision**

The purpose of the report was to update members of a review of the existing Storage in Communal Areas - Zero Tolerance Policy and sought approval to implement proposed changes to the policy. This includes a proposal to change the title to 'Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy'.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Approved the changes to the Storage in Communal Areas - Zero Tolerance Policy, and the new title of the revised policy: Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy (Appendix A of the Officer's report)
- ii. Support officers of the Council in enforcing the revised policy.

**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 Services Manager.

The Committee noted that an Equality Impact Assessment was published and circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

The Housing Services Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted concerns raised about the impact of the new policy on resources (timescales / staff etc). Discussions had taken place with the Streets and Open Spaces Team and no concerns regarding the impact on resources had been raised.
- ii. Noted that some council properties were managed by a Management Company and confirmed that if the proposed Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy was approved, officers would work with Management Companies to align their policies.
- iii. Officers would investigate concerns raised about storing mobility scooters in passageways and the impact on fire exit routes.
- iv. The Council (as a landlord) had a legal duty to ensure that exit routes were clear and safe in the event of an emergency. Officers undertook inspections and produced a quarterly report. Any patterns / issues would be identified following these reports. Noted that immediate risks included flammable liquids and motorcycles and that secondary risks included bicycles and plants which could cause obstructions in smoke filled areas where visibility could be reduced. The Council would undertake a proportionate approach in applying and enforcing the Policy.

The Committee resolved by 11 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions to endorse the recommendations.

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.

### **24/42/HSC HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Councillor Pounds left the meeting before the consideration of this item and did not return.

#### **Matter for Decision**

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is one of two long-term strategic financial planning documents produced each year for housing landlord services provided by Cambridge City Council.

The HRA MTFS provides an opportunity to review the assumptions incorporated as part of the longer-term financial planning process, recommending any changes in response to new legislative requirements, variations in external national and local economic factors and amendments to service delivery methods, allowing incorporation into budgets and financial forecasts at the earliest opportunity.

#### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Approved the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy, to include all proposals for changes in:
  - a. Financial assumptions as detailed in Appendix C of the document.
  - b. 2024/25 and future year revenue budgets, resulting from changes in financial assumptions and the financial consequences of changes in these and the need to respond to unavoidable pressures and meet new service demands, as introduced in Section 8, detailed in Appendix E and summarised in Appendix G of the document.
- ii. Approve that delegated authority be given to the Director of Communities and Assistant Director of Development to be in a position to confirm that

the authority can renew its investment partner status with Homes England.

- iii. To recommend to Council to approve proposals for changes in existing housing capital budgets, as introduced in Section 9 and detailed in Appendix F of the document, with the resulting position summarised in Appendix H.
- iv. To recommend to Council to approve proposals for new housing capital budgets, as introduced in Sections 6 and 7 and detailed in Appendix E of the document, with the resulting position summarised in Appendix H.
- v. To recommend to Council to approve the revised funding mix for the delivery of the Housing Capital Programme, recognising the latest assumptions for the use of Grant, Right to Buy Receipts, HRA Resources, Major Repairs Allowance and HRA borrowing, as summarised in Appendix H.

### **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 Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager.

The Committee were reminded that an Equality Impact Assessment had been published separately to accompany this report.

The Assistant Head of Finance and Business Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. If the Council didn't receive the level of grant funding set out in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Finance Strategy (MTFS), then the Council would need to review the redevelopment programme.
- ii. It was hoped that clarity around grant funding would be announced as part of the Government's Autumn Statement.
- iii. The redevelopment schemes which had been approved by the Executive Councillor for Housing were within the levels of borrowing that the Council could afford. However, risks would need to be considered for any



- future schemes being brought forward from January 2025 onwards if the level of grant funding had not been confirmed.
- iv. The HRA was well managed and sustainable at the moment. However, aspirations for the new build programme or improvements to existing housing stock above EPCC standard would need to be reviewed should grant funding not be forthcoming.
  - v. An external opinion on the risks of future borrowing to fund future redevelopment was scheduled to be undertaken in 2025.
  - vi. Confirmed that the HRA MTFs was based on several assumptions which could change either for the better or worse. This was why the HRA was reviewed twice a year where revisions could be made to assumptions and estimates.
  - vii. In response to comments about the tenant satisfaction survey; advised that there was benchmark data however officers needed further time to look at the methodologies of the surveys as there was a distortion in responses given depending on whether they were completed by telephone or online.

The Committee resolved by 9 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions to endorse recommendations 1 and 2.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions to endorse recommendations 3 to 5.

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.

### **24/43/HSC Update on New Build Council Housing Delivery**

#### **Matter for Decision**

The report provided a regular quarterly update on the City Council's new housing delivery and development programme.

#### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme as outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 of the officer's report.
- ii. Noted the Council's support to the cross-party coalition of over 100 council landlords, including Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

- District councils, in the five solutions for the government to 'secure the future of England's Council housing as outlined in section 4.2 of Officer's report.
- iii. Approved the formal adoption of a Portfolio approach to the Council's ten-year development programme which take into account the Councils Ambitions in line with Corporate objectives, HRA Business Plan, the Local Plan and the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy as outlined in Appendix 3, and acknowledging links to existing policies as set out in Appendix 3 part 7 of the officer's report.
  - iv. Noted the findings of the initial Passivhaus pilot report including a commitment to come back to Housing Scrutiny Committee in 2025 with recommendations on attaining Net Zero as outlined in Appendix 4 of the officer's report.
  - v. Approved an amendment to the Sustainable Housing design Guide via an Addendum to include a CamStandard for sustainable housing delivery as outlined in Appendix 4 of the officer's report.
  - vi. Approved commencement of work on a Framework for Change for North Cambridge through the Cambridge Investment Partnership as outlined in 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 Assistant Director (Development).

The Assistant Director (Development) advised:

- i. that paragraph 5.11 of the officer's report should read: Increase in the size of the total size of the Ten Year New Homes Programme from the original estimate of just under 2700 to 2,500.
- ii. in paragraph 7.3 and 7.3.1 of the officer's report this should read:
  - a. 7.3 Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy: The Portfolio approach is currently forecast to have ~~27~~2% of council homes to be let at Social Rent
  - b. 7.3.1 Annex 2: Para. 2.6: *"75% of the 40% affordable housing requirement to be Affordable/Social Rent. On S.106 sites above 15*

*homes at least 10% (of the 75%) to be allocated for Social Rent.* Currently the Council programme proposed c27~~2~~% of total affordable housing delivery as Social rent. This is significantly above the level set out in the strategy and will remain a target. It is important to note that this delivery is significantly subsidised through the delivery of a complementary component of homes at 80% of market rent which subsidize the reduced revenue.

- iii. That Appendix 4 – Sustainable Housing Design Guide was published and circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

The Assistant Director (Development) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The North East Cambridge Framework was based on the East Barnwell Framework. This involved conversations with community groups (doctors, schools, community centres) and residents to talk about what they liked about the area and what could be improved.
- ii. There were 14 void units at Stanton House, 4 on notice with 2 offers and 14 remaining tenants.
- iii. Noted that the University was looking at a research project into the benefits of people moving into new build houses.
- iv. A report on the Passivhaus units and energy consumption would be brought back to a future Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- v. There was a balance to be struck with redevelopment proposals; if the Council built homes to Passivhaus standards then the Council would have to reduce the number of homes built as there was not the resource to be able to do both. New homes were constructed as close to Passivhaus standard as possible.
- vi. The portfolio approach to redevelopment meant some sites could come forward with less than 40% affordable housing provision provided that the Council's redevelopment programme across the city delivered at least 40% affordable housing provision. It was noted that other councils had also adopted this approach.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 against with 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendations.

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.

## **24/44/HSC Report on Outcome of Rooftop Feasibility Study**

### **Matter for Decision**

The report set out the outcomes of the feasibility study conducted since its approval in September 2023, considering both upward extension of existing housing blocks and deep-retrofit of existing properties as a parallel approach to regeneration.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Noted the outcome of the Feasibility Study conducted, confirming the officer recommendation that no deliverable scheme proceed.
- ii. Approved that 243 - 313 Odds Lichfield Road, 1-12 Bracondale, 1-18 Fernwood, and 1-18 Heatherfield be removed from short term redevelopment consideration, and that any further long-term review remained aligned with business-as-usual maintenance and management consideration of these properties, as it does with all council housing stock.

### **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 Assistant Director (Development).

The Committee were reminded that an Equality Impact Assessment had been published separately to accompany this report.

It was noted that a resident of Lichfield Road had handed a petition to the Committee Manager just before the start of the meeting which had 21 signatures which opposed the redevelopment of Lichfield Road.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

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.

## **24/45/HSC Delivery of Refugee Housing Funded Through the LAHF Round 3**

### **Matter for Decision**

The Council has successfully delivered homes across Round 1 and Round 2 of the LAHF programme. This included delivery of 37 homes, exceeding a combined target of 34 homes across both prior rounds of funding.

A third round was announced by LAHF in early 2024, but was delayed due to national elections and subsequent change in government.

On the basis of confirmation from the Executive Councillor for Housing and the Chief Financial officer, a positive Expression of Interest was submitted to the LAHF, indicating that the Council were willing to enter into an MOU for the pre-allocated funding, subject to formal approval through the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

This report sought approval for the delivery of the 4 homes proposed, together with an allocated budget to be drawn down from the new homes programme funding built into the HRA MTFs.

### **Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to allow for the Round 3 payment of allocated funding to the Council.
- ii. Approved that the delivery of accommodation to cater for recent humanitarian schemes identified within this second round of LAHF funding be delivered as part of the Councils 2022-2032 New Build Housing Programme.
- iii. Approved that an indicative budget of £2,016,000 be drawn down in 2024/25 from the sum already ear-marked and approved for investment in new homes, to cover the costs associated with delivering 4 homes to serve as longer term accommodation, catering for the eligible cohort as defined in paragraph 4.2 of the Officer's report and to recognise grant funding of £921,675 towards this expenditure. Following the meeting of this need the properties delivered will become general needs housing held within council stock.
- iv. Authorised the Acting Chief Property Surveyor to approve the purchase of open market properties into council stock to serve as housing for the

eligible cohort as defined in paragraph 4.2 of the Officer's report, subject to consultation with the Director of Communities and the Chief Financial Officer.

**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 Assistant Director (Development).

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

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.

**24/46/HSC Redevelopment of 2-28b Davy Road, including associated land and Garages****Matter for Decision**

The report seeks approval to proceed with the redevelopment of Davy Road flats and garages through the Cambridge Investment Partnership to provide 90 new highly sustainable homes on the site. The report also seeks a budget to purchase the 45 Affordable Homes.

**Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing**

- i. Approved that the scheme be brought forward as a mixed tenure development and included in the Housing Capital Programme, with an indicative capital budget of £15,730,000 for the purchase of affordable homes to cover all site assembly, construction costs, professional fees and further associated fees. Budget will be drawn down from the sum already ear-marked and approved for investment in new homes.
- ii. Authorised the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve variations to the scheme including the

- number of units and mix of property types, sizes and tenure as outlined in the Officer's report.
- iii. Authorised the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor to approve an Affordable Housing Agreement with CIP for the purchase of 45 affordable homes. This agreement will be at a value provided by an independent valuer.
  - iv. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Executive Councillor for Housing in conjunction with the Chief Operating Officer to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) subject to a value for money assessment to be carried out on behalf of the Council.
  - v. Approved with immediate effect the purchase of the leasehold interest of flats at 2-28b Davy Road (evens) and the issue of Home Loss and Disturbance payments to qualifying Council tenants and Basic Loss and Disturbance payments to qualifying leaseholders affected by the potential redevelopment
  - vi. Approved giving 32 affected council tenants required to decant the highest priority on the Council's choice-based lettings system (Home-Link). The emergency banding status will be applied to all existing secure tenant applications from 18 September 2024.
  - vii. Delegated authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take steps preparatory to the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in respect of any Leasehold and Freehold properties required in order to deliver the scheme.
  - viii. Delegated authority to the Chief Operating Officer to make a CPO in respect of any leasehold or freehold interests that cannot be acquired by private treaty within a reasonable timescale and at a reasonable cost subject to the Chief Operating Officer being satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest for the use of compulsory purchase powers, and that all legal and policy requirements for the making and confirmation of a CPO have been met;
  - ix. Delegated authority to the Chief Operating Officer to serve initial Demolition Notices under the Housing Act 1985.

### **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 Assistant Director (Development).

The Committee were reminded that an Equality Impact Assessment had been published separately to accompany this report.

The Assistant Director (Development) corrected a typographical error in paragraph 2.1 of the officer's report that 9 homes (and not 12 homes) should be eligible for the Homes England grant funding.

The Assistant Director (Development) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted members concerns about the reduction in social rent properties in the council's portfolio and commented that the number of social rent properties being built across the country was low as it was difficult to make this tenure of property financially viable to develop.
- ii. Referred to the table in paragraph 7.1 of the officer's report and confirmed that reference made to 100% of residents experiencing anti-social behaviour should have been clarified to mean 100% of residents who responded to the consultation.
- iii. Noted concerns raised about works being carried out to properties which were potentially ear marked for redevelopment and advised that some works were necessary to ensure homes complied with health and safety requirements.
- iv. Redevelopment proposals would always consider retrofit options however it was noted that retrofitting would not always bring properties up to current levels for example space standards, therefore the case for redevelopment was strong. The sustainability standard that new homes were built to was high and it was hoped would future proof homes for a long time.

The Committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions to endorse the recommendations.

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.



The meeting ended at 8.46 pm

**CHAIR**

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