

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Wednesday, 15 March 2017 at 4.30 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Lynda Harford

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors
and Opposition spokesmen:

Anna Bradnam
Hazel Smith
Philippa Hart
Bunty Waters

Also in attendance: David McCraith

Officers:

Anita Goddard
Stephen Hills

Housing Operational Services Manager
Director of Housing

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

3. COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND

The Director of Housing presented the report which set out the funding allocation from DCLG under the Community Housing Fund for 2016/17. It was explained that the funding which was intended to offset the problem of second homes had been automatically allocated by government to the district.

In response to a query, members were informed that supporting local communities to bring forward affordable housing schemes in their villages was an alternative to rural exception site policy. While this required greater input by the local community it provided a greater return. Properties built through Community Land Trusts [CLT] were exempt from Right to Buy policy whereas those built on rural exception sites were not.

Reassurance was sought that trained staff would not be lost.

Members were informed that at the time of the meeting, Cambridge City Council was still to make its decision regarding use of the funding that they had also been allocated.

Members were informed that East Cambridgeshire District Council had detailed experience of bringing forward CLTs and that it had in house expertise that it was offering across the East of England.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **NOTED** the funding allocated for community led development.
- b) **APPROVED** the proposed use of funds outlined in Option A of the report, agreeing to explore the potential for a joint community led programme with Cambridge City

Council, with Community Land Trust (CLT) East providing the Gold Kickstart Package.

4. **INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT 2017**

The Director of Housing presented the Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 and proposals for the new Housing Strategy 2018. He explained that the 2017 strategy was only an interim strategy to allow for government policy changes to be implemented.

Members were informed that the intention was to work with Cambridge City Council in order to develop a shared housing strategy within the next 12 months.

Councillor Bradnam congratulated officers on Appendix B of the report which clearly set out the conditions under which the council had to work with regards to the national policy context.

In response to a concern raised regarding the reference to working with the private sector on the delivery of affordable homes, the Director of Housing clarified that private sector partners were to be identified and that it was acknowledged that in order to deliver the housing that was required, the resource of private sector companies would be needed.

Regarding starter homes at Northstowe, members expressed concern that this had been committed to at Northstowe however the detail had not been established regarding how this would work. The Portfolio Holder assured members that this was being worked on and that the council was keen to include the Rent Plus model at Northstowe, whereby a 10% deposit would be gifted. This would help those struggling to save for a deposit due to the high cost of renting property in the district.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017.
- b) **AGREED** the proposals for a joint Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire Housing Strategy from 2018.

5. **AFFORDABLE HOMES SERVICE PLAN 2016/17 AND 2017/18**

The Director of Housing presented an update on the progress of the Affordable Homes Service Plan 2016/17 and presented the 2017/18 Affordable Homes Service Plan.

The tenant profiling project was discussed:

- Concern was raised that the exercise may be seen as intrusive by tenants. Assurance was provided that officers who were very familiar with tenants would be used for this project. Learning from the pilot project would be applied and another review would be undertaken following completion of the profiling of the first three villages. Processes would be adjusted if needed.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that this work may seem intrusive, with an increasing older population input was needed from tenants in order to know which services they needed to enable them to remain in their homes. The profiling project would provide this insight.
- In case they received queries from local residents, it was advised that all elected members should be made aware of the questions being asked of tenants and a summary of the benefits of the project provided to them before communication was sent out to tenants.

Communal rooms were discussed. Members felt that these were underutilised as they

were not well publicised. Members were informed that officers were seeking to undertake a pilot project in Bassingbourn to see if there was an appetite in the local community for the use of communal rooms. Officers recognised that these were a valuable resource in tackling issues of loneliness and isolation. The Local Member for Bassingbourn expressed his support for this pilot project.

The Housing Portfolio Holder:

- a) **APPROVED** the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2017/18.
- b) **NOTED** the progress to date on existing projects within the 2016/17 Service Plan.

6. TENANT PARTICIPATION GROUP

The Chairman of the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) updated members on the work that the TPG had been undertaking on the use of communal rooms. A report would be presented on this on 30 March 2017. The next TPG project would look at new lets and voids and would begin in April 2017.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The provisional date for the next meeting was Wednesday 21 June 2017 at 4.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.
