

Cabinet

Tuesday, 16 April 2024

Decisions

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 16 April 2024. Decisions made by the Cabinet will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Pippa Turvey.

1. Peer Review Action Plan

- a) Cabinet approved the action plan in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) Cabinet further agreed that progress against the plan would be reported alongside the quarterly Key Performance Indicators until complete.

Options Considered: Cabinet could have chosen to reject the plan in its entirety. Although this would potentially reduce officer workload in the short term, it would also pass up opportunities for delivering improvements to residents and would potentially be contrary to the council's best value duty.

Cabinet could have adopted the plan in part accepting the proposed response to some recommendations and rejecting or amending the proposed response to others.

Reason for Decision: The peer review process required that the Council considered the recommendations of the peer challenge team and responded with an action plan to deliver improvements in line with those recommendations. The action plan needed to be published and the peer challenge team would re-visit again in September 2024 to consider the Council's progress against that plan.

2. Proposed Administration of the Northstowe Community Activation Grant Fund on Behalf of Homes England, Criteria and Award Process

Cabinet:

- a. Approved the Council administering Homes England's Activation Grant Fund as set out in paragraphs 8-10 of the report.
- b. Approved the scheme criteria and guidance for the Community Activation Fund as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Options Considered: To agree and accept in full the proposed grant scheme criteria, guidance and administrative arrangements.

To agree in principle to the proposal, but with changes recommended to the

proposed scheme criteria, guidance or administrative arrangements, giving reasons.

To reject the proposal to administer this grant scheme, giving reasons.

Reason for Decision: There was a genuine gap in the structure of available funding available locally to encourage larger scale community activation events and initiatives at Northstowe. Homes England recognised this but lacked the relevant capacity and experience to process and administer grants of this nature but had committed funds to enable a partner organisation to administer this fund on its behalf.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Communications and Communities Team was active at Northstowe and had a wide range of community contacts and knowledge of the current range of networks and activities present. It was well positioned to encourage and support applications to this fund, and the technical expertise to administer the funds effectively.

By providing the administration of this £20,000 per year, six-year fund, South Cambridgeshire District Council would be able to work in partnership with Homes England to positively influence the strength and character of the new community at Northstowe.

3. **Low-income Family Tracker (LIFT)**

Cabinet agreed:

- a. Purchasing a two-year license for the Low-Income Family Tracker platform at a cost of £53,000.
- b. Employing an additional two-year fixed term Development Officer, at a total cost of £104,000, to manage and maintain the system and coordinate projects across the Council.
- c. A budget of £30,000 to support the benefits take up campaign with direct mailshots.

Options Considered: Cabinet could have chosen not to progress with any of the recommended options set out in the report and either do nothing or ask officers to carry out further work.

To defer a decision until a later date, asking officers for specific further information to allow a decision to be made.

Reason for Decision: As set out in the report.

4. **Homes for Ukraine – Landlord Incentive Scheme Revision**

Cabinet agreed the revised Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme

Policy, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Options Considered: To agree the revised Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme as set out in appendix A to the report, but with revisions.

To defer a decision to the next Cabinet meeting and provide advice on what additional information was required.

To reject the Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme revision and retain the current policy.

To end the Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme entirely.

Reason for Decision: A Landlord Incentive Scheme was launched on 9 October 2023 to help improve access to the private rented market for guests who had been hosted under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Although 25 landlords had contacted the Council to find out more information since the incentive scheme was launched, only one landlord had signed up. In general, the feedback had been that the incentive package offered was not generous enough when compared to a landlord renting using their existing methods.

A comprehensive marketing plan for the scheme was launched, which included an online editorial in the Cambridge Independent, an advert for the scheme in the print copy of the Cambridge Independent (which ran for three editions), Google and Facebook adverts and leaflet information to every home in the district alongside the Council's residents' magazine. Due to the lack of sign-ups a review of the scheme had been deemed necessary.

The proposed revision to the policy would enable a much more comprehensive package to be offered to participating landlords, further increasing the number of properties available without adding additional pressures to the social housing system.

The Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme was fully funded from the Government tariff funding provided to support guests.

5. Acquisition of 33no. Affordable Homes, Cottenham

Cabinet approved the acquisition, authorising the Service Manager – Acquisitions and Development to proceed to contract with the developer (Redrow).

Cabinet approved the onward sale of the relevant Shared Ownership homes (4).

Options Considered: Cabinet could have rejected this acquisition.

Reason for Decision: SCDC's Business Plan set the ambitious target to double the number of New Build Affordable Homes built annually.

Prior to the submission of bids for this site a full financial appraisal of this was

undertaken which has been approved by Finance.

The scheme could be considered value for money in that it paid off in 35 years – within the limit of 45 set in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).

6. Acquisition of 45no. Affordable Homes, Barrington

Cabinet approved the acquisition, authorising the Service Manager – Acquisitions and Development to proceed to contract with the developer (Redrow).

Cabinet approved the onward sale of the relevant Shared Ownership homes (13).

Options Considered: Cabinet could have rejected this acquisition

Reason for Decision: SCDC's Business Plan set the ambitious target to double the number of New Build Affordable Homes built annually.

Prior to the submission of bids for this site a full financial appraisal of this was undertaken which has been approved by Finance.

The scheme could be considered value for money in that it paid off in 35 years – within the limit of 45 set in the New Build Council Housing Strategy (revised 2023).