

Report to: Cabinet 29 June 2020

**Lead Cabinet
Member:** Cllr Neil Gough, Deputy Leader

Lead Officer: Gareth Bell, Communications and Sustainable
Communities Service Manager

Introduction of additional liaison meetings

Key Decision

1. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Cabinet approves the introduction of 5 new liaison meetings in Barrington, Caldecote, Hardwick, Swavesey and Sawston bringing the total number of concurrent active liaison meetings to 6.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The Council puts community engagement at the heart of planning and developing new and existing communities. Community forums already take place in major strategic areas of growth, such as the new town of Northstowe, new town at Waterbeach, and large sites on the edge of Cambridge. Councillors have agreed in the 2020-25 business plan to build on this by creating liaison meetings in villages where a higher proportion of new homes are already planned when compared to the size of the existing village.
4. A trial in Cottenham has provided insight as to the value these meetings have for villages experiencing more growth. They have provided regular and easy access to discuss issues with developers and other key stakeholders. This supports good engagement and active methods of community integration.

5. The villages suggested for new liaison meetings have been identified as they meet one, or a combination of, the following criteria:
 - (i) Over 20% growth planned within the village,
 - (ii) Multiple developers on site throughout developments,
 - (iii) House building taking place over at least a 3-year period,
 - (iv) At least 50 new homes being planned within the village.

Details

The Cottenham Model

6. A liaison meeting was introduced in Cottenham because concerns were raised over the amount of housing planned for the village. At the time the meetings were initiated, Cottenham expected to see an additional 524 houses built over a 5-year period by 4 different developers, meaning the number of homes in the village would grow by just over 20%.
7. Quarterly meetings were facilitated by a member of the Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing Team and supported by one of the planning officers responsible for the site. In the case of Cottenham, a planning enforcement officer also attended to deal with related issues. The meetings were chaired by the local district Councillors. The meeting had representation from the Parish Council (PC), the district council (SCDC), and developers with full or reserved matters planning permission to build new homes and facilities.
8. The following terms of reference were established as guiding principles:
 - (i) Mitigate any disruptive impact of construction on residents,
 - (ii) Promote the integration of new residents in the community,
 - (iii) Engage residents with the new development and associated facilities.
9. One example of integrating the new community was a welcome pack that was produced by SCDC, in partnership with the Cottenham Parish Council, and delivered to new residents. The pack contained contact details and descriptions of all community, sports and professional services offered within the village as well as an up-to-date map of their locations.

Key Benefits

10. Regular communication between key stakeholders which was paramount in facilitating:
 - (i) mitigation measures for early construction issues,
 - (ii) joined up working between developers to make sure roads, paths and other infrastructure worked seamlessly across the site,
 - (iii) applications to statutory bodies ie Highways Authority and Planning Authority.

Considerations

11. The table at Appendix A shows the trajectory of homes for all sites between 50 and 500 properties. This table does not include strategic sites at Cambourne, Waterbeach, Northstowe, or Bourn as these villages are served by existing public community forums.
12. Barrington appears top of the list because they are expecting the largest percentage growth within the village. A total of 52%. They will also experience sustained growth for around 6 years, so it is important that a meeting is introduced here to manage that.
13. Caldecote has the second highest percentage of growth. It has already seen just over a third of its new housing built (66 of 195) but the remaining housing still equates to over 20% growth over a 3-year period within this relatively small village. Any community integration measures introduced on site can still be targeted to residents who have recently moved in.
14. Hardwick is recommended due to its high percentage of growth. It will also experience sustained development over 5 years.
15. Swavesey is included as there is 21% expected growth and 100 homes are also forecasted to be built in a single year – which is the joint second highest amount in a single village within this dataset.
16. Sawston is included due to number of houses coming forward, and these are being built by 4 different developers. There is the potential for the housing planned from 2025/26 to be brought forward so it would be prudent to set up a meeting here.
17. Many villages in the 10% to 19% growth range have not been considered for liaison meetings as a good number of the homes have already been built. Melbourn (131 out of 310) and Willingham (56 out of 180) have seen over 30% of their houses complete, whereas Great Abington (45 out of 58) and Balsham (50 out of 84) have over 50% of their homes already completed. This coupled with the relatively low overall growth percentage has meant they are not currently recommended for a liaison meeting.
18. Over is not currently being recommended as completions are only due to start in 2021/22 and the build-out is relatively short (2 years).
19. The Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing Team can facilitate 6 concurrent liaison meetings within current resources.
20. The planning service can provide a planning officer to attend the 5 additional meetings. They will be able to liaise with other officers in the planning service on specific matters, such as enforcement.

21. The introduction of 5 liaison meetings will mean an extra 20 additional meetings each year. These are only effective with developer and local engagement as there has been at Cottenham. County Highways will support the meetings by responding to queries and will send a representative if the matter cannot be dealt with remotely.
22. A review will be undertaken within the first year to make sure the meetings are working as intended and using resources effectively. This review will also look at how engagement in some of these smaller sites could be integrated into any neighbouring strategic sites. This might be helpful if there are common issues or opportunities to explore.
23. Meetings will be held virtually until government guidance allows the safe re-introduction of face-to-face meetings.
24. It should be noted that liaison meetings are merely one way of facilitating communication between the key stakeholders in a development site. All parishes are encouraged to maintain an open dialogue with area managers in the planning department to problem-solve at the earliest possible opportunity.

Options

25. Cabinet could:
 - a. approve the introduction of 5 new liaison meetings in Barrington, Caldecote, Hardwick, Swavesey and Sawston bringing the total number of active liaison meetings to 6.
 - b. approve their own combination of liaison meetings using the data and information provided in this report.
26. If Cabinet would like to consider more than 6 concurrent liaison meetings further work would be required before a formal decision can be taken. This will ensure sufficient staff resources can be put in place.

Implications

27. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

28. The recommended number of meetings can be resourced within existing budgets.

Staffing

29. Recommended meetings can be resourced within current staffing capacity.

Risks/Opportunities

30. These meetings provide an opportunity to support some of our new residents moving into our existing communities. This can be invaluable for people moving to a new home as a lot of good habits and local relationships are lost or forgotten by the relocation.

Equality

31. It is often the case that new developments have a higher proportion of those with protected characteristics, including race, pregnancy and maternity, age and disability (the latter two examples are particularly the case where there is provision of disability friendly homes and/or homes for life). An equality impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the equality impacts of new liaison forums set out in this report.

29. Broadly, the equality impacts of this proposal, are largely positive, by seeking to manage the potentially negative impacts of new developments, foster good relations and integrate new and existing residents, and provide communities with opportunities to shape the provision of facilities that can help to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

32. The business plan sets out objectives to establish new liaison meetings.

Appendices

Appendix A: Housing Trajectory for Minor Developments (50 – 500 homes)

Report Author:

Ryan Coetsee – Development Officer, Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing
Telephone: (01223) 752 449
Mobile: 07395 283 217