

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 13 November 2008
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager – New Communities

RESPONSE TO ARBURY PARK TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

Purpose

1. To provide Cabinet with an action plan to address the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group's report on Arbury/Orchard Park.
2. This is not a key decision but as the plans at **Appendix 1** rely on officers completing specific actions, it requires the endorsement of Cabinet.

Background

3. Following a Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17 January 2008 at the Meadows Community Centre in Arbury, where many issues were raised about the Arbury development, it was decided that a task and finish group be established, to examine the development of Arbury Park and to recommend learning points for use in future major developments in the district.
4. The Task and Finish Group, consisting originally of five district councillors and the Chairman of Impington Parish Council, held its first meeting on 12 February 2008 to agree a scoping document. Over the following six months a further 17 meetings were held which involved interviewing developers, builders, social landlords, health partners, a representative of the residents' association and officers and councillors from the City, County and District councils. A visit was also made to Huntingdonshire District Council to compare experiences on new developments.
5. The Group identified learning points for future developments, as well as many positive achievements. A final report from the Task and Finish Group was approved by the Scrutiny committee on 2 October and then presented to Cabinet on 9 October. The Executive Management Team (EMT) was asked to consider the implications of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations and present a report to Cabinet.

Considerations

6. Following the publication of the draft Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report it was sent to officers for comment. The following points, amongst others, were raised in response to the recommendations.
 - (i) R1a - The design guide for Arbury Park was approved by the Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders on 6 October 2008.
 - (ii) R1d - SCDC cannot require adoption of roads, as this is County Council responsibility.
 - (iii) R3a - SCDC has to register planning applications where all the information has been submitted regardless of quality.
 - (iv) R14d - Early limitations on class sizes at schools would affect the schools ability to attract per capita government funding

7. Following publication of the final Task and Finish Group report and its approval at Scrutiny committee on 2 October an action plan has been produced to address the recommendations. This can be viewed at **Appendix 1**.
8. The action plan seeks to comment on the recommendations indicating where lessons have already been learnt and issues are being addressed; where there is work ongoing and where further work or resources are required.

Issues

9. The following three items have been passed to colleagues at Cambridgeshire County Council for them to comment on
 - (i) R1d - The County and District councils should specify road and footpath materials that are attractive as well as durable and fit for purpose.
 - (ii) R14b - A phasing plan for the development should provide for the school to be fully ready for use as soon as the first residents move in.
 - (iii) R14d - The County Council should limit initial reception class intake to new schools and phase increases in admissions in line with forecast in-catchment pupil numbers. This would ensure that new schools grow at the same rate as the development and can accommodate all in-catchment pupils as they arrive. This would aid community cohesion.
10. Officers will need to facilitate discussions with the County Council regarding points 9i-iii above, as this Council cannot progress these issues alone.
11. In relation to recommendation 5c – “These [community facilities] should be funded and put in place at the earliest stage and then reimbursed via the S106 agreement.” EMT considered the following options:
 - (i) Use Council resources to forward fund community/commercial facilities.
 - (ii) Discuss options with Cambridgeshire Horizons for future developments.
 - (iii) Take no action.
12. EMT concluded that the most appropriate action was 11ii, to discuss options with Cambridgeshire Horizons. There would be financial implications and risks attached to option 11ii above, which officers will advise on once a way forward has been suggested and ahead of any decision.

Implications

13. Financial	To address some of the recommendations, financial commitments are required. Some are being addressed through service planning bids and some through S106 negotiations but there may be areas that require additional funding if the recommendations are to be fully met. For example, recommendation 5c would require significant financial resources and a further report on these would need to be prepared.
Legal	A number of the recommendations require legal input and it is anticipated that the newly appointed planning lawyer will be able to assist with this.
Staffing	All the recommendations have an impact on staff resources and these are being addressed where appropriate and possible.

Risk Management	The Council must address the recommendations of the Task and Finish group to reduce the risk of failure at future developments.
Equal Opportunities	The Council is committed to providing a fair and equitable service to all its residents and learning the lessons from developments such as Arbury Park helps to achieve this aim.

Consultations

14. EMT and all officers listed in the action plan have been consulted.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

15.

Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
Officers are working to enable the development of sustainable new communities in South Cambridgeshire, in partnership with Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, Parish Councils, local communities and others.
Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
By learning the lessons of past and current developments, the Council can expand/build on the service it delivers to both existing and new communities, ensuring that the growth of existing communities enhances them and brings benefits to their, and their neighbouring residents.
Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
The actions ensure the needs of any new community are met and support other services to deliver growth and to serve a growing population. They promote the cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of communities across the whole district.

Conclusions/Summary

16. The action plan at Appendix 1 seeks to address the recommendations set by the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group to improve existing and new communities for the enhancement of everyone involved.

Recommendations

17. Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) Agree the actions presented at Appendix 1 in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.
 - (b) Agree the actions marked “no action” will not be progressed by SCDC.
 - (c) Agree to option 11ii above as an appropriate response to recommendation 5c.
 - (d) Support further discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council in relation to the issues at paragraph 9 above.
 - (e) Forward this report and accompanying action plan to Scrutiny Committee for consideration on 4th December.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report, 2 October 2008

Contact Officer: Suzanne McBride, Corporate Manager New Communities, (01954 713350)
Kirsty Human – Corporate Projects Officer, (01954) 713297