

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee	2 nd April 2009
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ORCHARD PARK

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of progress made on the action plan for Orchard Park, produced following the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's report on Orchard Park (formally Arbury Park) in October 2008.

Options

2. To welcome the progress made at Orchard Park and the efforts of all involved. To recognise the difficulties faced by residents in new developments and the complexities of the issues and decisions that occur. To support the continued monitoring of the action plan whilst appreciating the delays that the economic downturn has caused to all the growth sites in the district.

Background

3. The Scrutiny Committee appointed a Task and Finish Group to review Orchard Park (formally Arbury Park) in February 2008. Following months of interviews with partners, stakeholders, officers and other interested parties; the group reported their findings to Scrutiny Committee in October 2008. Cabinet considered this report in November and reported back to the Scrutiny Committee in December with an action plan to address the Task and Finish Groups recommendations. The December action plan is attached at appendix D for information.
4. Three months on we are reporting progress on the action plan to Scrutiny Committee and also advising members of other interventions at Orchard Park.

Considerations

5. In November 2008 the newly appointed Corporate Manager for New Communities took on board the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group and responsibility for the action plan. Whilst keen to learn the lessons of previous and current developments to make improvements, it is also important to recognise that the economic climate has changed significantly since the Task and Finish Group began their review. Changes have been made in the way the council liaises with developers in order to try and ensure sites continue to move forward albeit at a much slower rate. More of the actions would have been implemented had there not been a slow down in the build and planning of the new developments. At Orchard Park we are working in partnership with the developers, Cambridgeshire Horizons, the Homes and Communities Agency and our local authority neighbours to implement the lessons learnt, and have made further progress since December.

Progress at Orchard Park

6. Since December much work has been done at Orchard Park to improve its appearance. Litter picking, grass cutting, stimming and hedge trimming have taken place by SCDC, County and Gallagher's to smarten up the development. Maintenance programmes are now in place to ensure the site remains tidy.

Gallagher's have also installed temporary zebra crossings at the primary school to make the route safer for children, along with fixing the faulty street lamps, planting over 100 street trees and beginning work on the final pavement surfacing.

7. SCDC have installed two map boards, which can also be used for notices by the community. Stagecoach began running the Citi4 service through the development in early January and discussions are now taking place over the final locations for the bus shelters. A joint media strategy has been developed between SCDC, County and Cambridgeshire Horizons to suppress potential negative stories and plan the positive good news stories coming from the development. These include some of the many events organised by the community development worker, such as the Christmas carol singing, Christmas lights, arts launch and community events.
8. The community development officer and parish clerk are now based in offices at the Primary School, they will be moving to the community centre once it is handed over. This has facilitated more use of the community rooms at the school, with them playing host to all shadow community council meetings, OPAG and many community events. Finally, SCDC will shortly be carrying out a survey of all Orchard Park and Cambourne residents as a supplement to the "Place Survey" in order to discover the views and aspirations of people living in new communities as opposed to the more established communities in the district. The outcomes will help us plan for the next new communities ensuring they include the services people expect.

Governance

9. In November, Impington Parish Council supported by the District Council established a Shadow Community Council, with resident volunteers. The Shadow Council has had monthly meetings and its recommendations have been passed to Impington Parish Council for endorsement or approval. The Shadow Council has had the services of an experienced clerk, and also benefitted from training sessions provided through CPALC and SCDC. The community development officers from Bpha and the District Council have also worked closely with the shadow councillors to sustain good community links. The Shadow Council has faced significant demands including considering the precept and the transfer of the community centre.
10. The order to create Orchard Park as a new parish has been sealed and will come into effect on 1st April 2009. Elections cannot take place until 4th June and therefore in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government legislation, the three local SCDC Members for Histon and Impington will become Interim Councillors for Orchard Park Community Council until the new Community Council has elected members in June.

Partnership Working

11. The Orchard Park Action Group (OPAG), which was set up during the Task and Finish Group's review to work with the local members and residents, has continued to meet regularly and feed into a more strategic Partners Group. The Partners Group is chaired by the Executive Director and brings together the three local authorities, developers, house builders, Cambridgeshire Horizons and Housing Associations to address the top priorities from the issues log produced by OPAG.
12. The Partners group has been successful in coordinating improvements to Orchard Park, including its appearance, completing the affordable housing and establishing the bus service early in the New Year. The Partners Group held a workshop in March to consider ways of "kick starting" development on the site by reviewing housing tenures, exploring funding options for house builders and considering innovative build options. Persimmon homes have since confirmed that they expect to start working on their next major development plot during April 2009.

13. Cabinet recognised the importance of making improvements at Orchard Park on 15th January by allocating £15,000 for remedial work under its programme to tackle the economic downturn. Cambridgeshire Horizons and Bpha have also contributed funding of £50,000 and £10,000 respectively. The district council is working with the Shadow Community Council and other local residents to ensure the funding is spent in ways that support the local communities priorities and increase social, economic and environmental well being.
14. The following actions have also been made following the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish group:
 1. Appointment of a Community Technical Manager to oversee development of community facilities on growth sites, funded by Cambridgeshire Horizons. At Orchard Park he is facilitating the handover of the new Community Centre.
 2. Appointment of a Planning Lawyer to the New Communities team, also with funding from Cambridgeshire Horizons. At Orchard Park he has been working on the transfer of community facilities including open space and arrangements for the Community Council.
 3. Maintaining an up-to-date Orchard Park issues log to record outstanding actions to be monitored by OPAG and coordinated by SCDC.
 4. Review of facility procurement, moving away from traditional S106 agreements to more partnership approaches not linked to the developers trigger points.
15. On 10th December 2008, Cambridgeshire County Council reported to the South Cambridgeshire "In Your Patch" meeting, on the actions identified by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. Many actions relate to joint working and both authorities are committed to continuing the partner approach through partner meetings and cross authority projects. The full report is attached at appendix B for information.
16. On 13th January 2009, Cambridge City Council presented a report to its Environment Scrutiny Committee on SCDC's review of Orchard Park and accompanying action plan. The full report is attached at appendix C for information. The committee concluded to:
 1. Review the findings from SCDC in further detail and actions (if any) for the City;
 2. Identify proposals to address weaknesses identified in Arbury Park as soon as possible and prior to any transfer to the City Council;
 3. Evaluate Arbury Park against the Quality Charter; and
 4. Evaluate lessons learnt for future developments, particularly the urban extensions.
17. Officers from SCDC and Cambridge City Council have met recently to discuss Orchard Park and will be working together to help produce a report for the Environment Scrutiny Committee at Cambridge City Council.

Updates to the Action Plan

18. A revised action plan is attached at appendix A. It details the steps taken to address the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations, reflecting the response/action to the Task and Finish group's recommendations in December and the current position at Orchard Park and other growth sites in South Cambridgeshire.
19. Of the 43 recommendations, 12 were actioned or due to be completed by December 2008. The other 31 recommendations had plans for completion, which were detailed in the report. In the revised action plan at appendix A, members will notice that 29 of the recommendations have now been actioned and are complete, an increase of 17 from December. The other 26 have comments listed beside them explaining the

current situation and, where possible, timescales for completion.

20. The New Communities team are committed to learning the lessons from Orchard Park and other new developments. By bringing together community services, major developments, corporate projects, economic development, sustainability and other specialist officers (S106 officer, planning lawyer, community, technical manager) they now bring a project team approach to delivering growth in the district. Over time, this should bring lasting benefits in terms of co-ordination and a joined-up approach.
21. The current economic climate poses significant challenges. We are working closely with all partners, including the HCA and Cambridgeshire Horizons, to explore innovative approaches and ensure we gain maximum benefit from the investment of Housing Growth Fund and other public money to support the delivery of homes over the next two years
22. Over the coming months, we expect to produce revised project plans with new delivery targets. These will enable a number of the unresolved recommendations in the Task and Finish Group's report to be actioned. It is therefore recommended that reporting further progress on the action plan be timetabled to take account of the wider development context.

Implications

23. Financial	There are no financial commitments as a result of this report but funding has been made available through other reports and partners to enable improvements at Orchard Park.
Legal	There are no legal implications.
Staffing	Staff continue to be at the centre of delivering results and addressing issues on the development. Many more officer hours are being spent on Orchard Park than at other new developments.
Risk Management	The action plan serves as a reminder to other developments of the risks involved in designing and building new communities. We will continue to monitor these.
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 Orchard Park helps to achieve this aim.

Consultations

24. Officers involved in Orchard Park and those listed in the action plan along with the New Communities Portfolio Holder have been consulted on this report.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

25.	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 and local communities.
	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 serve a growing population. They promote the cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of communities across the district.

Conclusions/Summary

26. Significant progress has been made at Orchard Park since the completion of the Task and Finish Group Review. There is still much work to be done and officers will continue to help with these as the community grows under the direction of the new Community Council.
27. In terms of the wider recommendations relating to growth sites in general, the team are committed to making improvements but are being prevented from implementing a number of agreed actions due to the slow down in development. Lessons have been learnt and will be progressed once development moves forward on other major sites.

Options

28. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the significant improvements made on the action plan at appendix A. With regard further updates on the recommendations, officers ask that this is scheduled for the medium term, perhaps in six months time. By then most of the target dates will have been reached and the economic climate may have improved so that officers can implement the proposed actions.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Response to Arbury Park Task and Finish Group Report – 4th December 2008
- Arbury Park Action Plan – 4th December 2008
- Arbury Park (Orchard Park) Lessons Learnt – Report to South Cambridgeshire In Your Patch Meeting – 10th December 2008
- Review of Arbury Park Development – Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee, Cambridge City Council – 13th January 2009.

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