

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

9 July 2014

Attendance:

Councillors:

Tait (Chairman) (P)

Godfrey (P)

Miller (P)

Other invited Councillors:

J Berry (P)

McLean (P)

Dibden (P)

Scott (P)

Izard (P)

TACT representatives:

Mrs J Steventon Baker (P)

Mr J Bond (P)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Mr D Chafe (TACT)

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Godfrey declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda items due to his role as a County Council employee. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 26 March 2014 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No statements were made or questions asked.

4. **WINCHESTER EXTRA CARE SCHEME**
(Report CAB2601(HSG) refers)

Councillor Tait declared a personal (but not prejudicial) as a representative on the St Johns Winchester Charity which had been consulted on the proposals. He remained in the room, spoke and voted.

In response to questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery advised that the current proposal was for 51 units, but the Council would aim to achieve the maximum number of units possible without altering the proposed footprint. The units would be allocated in line with the normal arrangements under Hampshire Home Choice and it was likely that 50% of possible tenants would transfer from other family properties within the District.

The Committee noted the conflicting demands of local residents/businesses requirement for nearby parking, and the need for local housing in a convenient location.

The Head of New Homes Delivery reported that the proposals had been discussed with the Winchester Sheltered Housing Forum where it had been supported in principle. He confirmed that the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) would expect rents to be charged at an affordable level, but ultimately the level of rent would be decided by the Council at the appropriate time.

In response to questions, the Head of Major Projects confirmed that the Park and Ride buses would have capacity for scheme residents, particularly as they would usually be travelling during the operation of the free bus travel scheme (i.e. after peak times). The buses were fully wheelchair accessible.

The Head of Major Projects stated that the Chesil Street surface car park (which had 90 spaces) was currently fully utilised and consequently, if the scheme was to proceed, these users would have to find alternative parking. He emphasised that there was spare capacity at the nearby Chesil Street Multi-storey car park of approximately 300 spaces during the week, and more available at weekends. The car park had recently been awarded the Park Mark award and improvements were ongoing, including the introduction of a number of wider spaces on the ground level, improved lighting and CCTV coverage, motorcycle bays and redecoration. In addition, eight additional on-street parking bays had been provided in Wharf Hill and 20 on-street spaces by the site (replacing the existing 20 spaces on Barfield Close). A further 26 undercroft spaces would be made available beneath the scheme to let to local businesses or residents on a commercial basis.

One Member highlighted that even with these additional car parking spaces, there would still be a net loss of parking available. He therefore requested that Officers re-examine the area to ascertain whether there was any additional potential for on-street parking bays. This was agreed.

In response to questions, the Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed that the nature and slope of the site meant that it would not be feasible to use the space allocated for undercroft car parking for additional housing units.

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that as care would be provided on-site within the scheme, there would not be a requirement for short term spaces available for visiting care workers.

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that County Council and Government HAPPI standards would form the basis for the design of the building. The consultation carried out to date had raised a number of concerns regarding the aesthetics of the building design which would be worked through with the architects before a formal planning application was submitted.

The Committee noted that a number of recommendations were subject to Cabinet approval at its meeting on 10 September 2014.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. That Cabinet confirms its support for Chesil Street surface car park as the preferred site for the Extra Care scheme.**
- 2. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), in consultation with the Head of Estates, be authorised to proceed to tendering a build contract for the scheme**
- 3. That a further report be brought back to Cabinet, in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rule 6.4, prior to the acceptance of a Tender price, detailing the outcome of the planning application (including consultation with local residents), the estimated final scheme cost and the overall viability.**
- 4. That the Portfolio Holder for Business Services be authorised to appropriate (through the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process and before commencement of any building works) the Chesil Street Surface Car Park for the purposes of Part II of the Housing Act 1985.**
- 5. That the use of the Harris Bequest to assist in the funding of the scheme be supported in principle, subject to confirmation when the report referred to in 5 above is brought back to Cabinet. .**
- 6. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), in consultation with the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Estates, and subject to obtaining any special consents that may be required under the Housing Act 1985 and the Local Government Act 1988, be authorised to agree detailed terms and enter into a long lease of the shared ownership properties within the scheme with Sentinel Housing Association.**

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to approval of the project by Cabinet, the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to submit a planning application for the scheme.
2. That the appointment of PDP, Chartered Architects, as the lead architect for the scheme up to RIBA stage 3 be approved.
3. That officers be requested to investigate whether there is potential to introduce additional on-street residents parking bays in the vicinity of the Chesil Street surface car park

5. **UPDATED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**
(Report CAB2602(HSG) refers)

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that, since the Report was published, further Government announcements had been made regarding the extension of borrowing available. As a consequence, the Council believed it was able to fund the schemes outlined in Paragraph 3.1 of the Report.

The Committee welcomed the proposal to establish an Informal Policy Group to review how rents were set for new build homes. The proposed scope of the Group's review would be provided for its first meeting and this could include consideration of the scheme viability period used (currently 30 years).

One Member queried how the Strategy would fit in with other Council strategies, such as the Low Carbon Route Map and living wage policy. The Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed that he would sense check the Strategy against such documents and Recommendation 3 below enabled him to make minor amendments.

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) advised that although the demand for homes with fewer bedrooms had increased as a result of the Government's welfare reforms, there remained a demand for other types of property as well. It was essential that a mix of sizes of dwellings was provided to enable a flow between properties as required.

The Head of New Homes Delivery confirmed that the architect's brief for all future new builds was to include flexibility of design to enable the further sub-division of rooms, should this be required in the future.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet that:

1. **That the Housing Development Strategy be adopted as the framework for delivering the Council's New Homes Programme.**

2. That an Informal Policy Group be established to review how rents are set for new build Council homes, with membership as outlined below:

Councillors Tait (Chairman), J Berry, Dibden, Izard, McLean and Scott

3. That the Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to make non-material amendments to the Housing Development Strategy from time to time, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

4. That the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) be authorised to submit a planning application in respect of 2 new dwellings at Springvale, Swanmore and to tender the build works.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2013/14 OUTTURN

(Report CAB2597(HSG) refers)

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) responded to detailed questions from Members and, in particular, the following points were raised:

- i. The Stock Survey was 97% complete and analysis of the results had begun. A Report would be submitted to the next Committee meeting, making consequential recommendations for the forthcoming work programme. It was acknowledged that this would include consideration of the requirement for roof maintenance and whether further improvements were required to address damp issues across the housing stock. This report would also examine whether the amount set aside for responsive repairs was adequate, including having regard to the impact of the bad weather during the previous winter.
- ii. An update of progress against the Estates Improvement Programme could be circulated to all Committee Members outside of the meeting.
- iii. It was of concern that Southern Gas had recently carried out work, including within tenants' properties, without informing the Housing Services Team. However, discussions had taken place to try to ensure this would not happen again.
- iv. Tenders for the building of the new Victoria House scheme had been sought using the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Construction Framework and the Chief Housing Officer acknowledged that it was disappointing that only one tender had been received. This had been relayed back to the HCA and the Council would carry out a fresh tender process in accordance with Contracts Procedure Rules
- v. It was clarified that kitchens and bathrooms over a certain specified age in void properties were not automatically refurbished. Instead a judgement was made dependant upon the condition of the property itself and neighbouring Council properties.
- vi. Both Tenant Participation/Information posts had now been filled, with new staff commencing later in July.

In general, Members welcomed the Report and congratulated the Chief Housing Officer and Team for their work over the previous year.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT THE REVENUE CARRY FORWARDS AMOUNTING TO £124,000 BE APPROVED AS SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE REPORT, NOTING THAT THESE ARE IN ADDITION TO THE GENERAL FUND CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS DETAILED IN CAB2595 DATED 2 JULY 2014.

RESOLVED:

1. That the financial performance information be noted.
2. That the Capital carry forwards amounting to £878,108 as detailed in paragraph 4 be supported, which have been included in the overall capital carry forward recommendation in CAB2594 dated 2 July 2014.

7. **2013/14 PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SERVICES**
(Report CAB2598(HSG) refers)

The Committee noted a correction to the Report's executive summary to clarify that the amount recommended for carry forwards was £1.002 million.

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) highlighted that the level of current rent arrears was below 1% and the independent Housemark reports which compare Value for Money between social landlords remained very positive. He confirmed that the Council's rent arrears procedure included a provision that referred tenants to the Citizens Advice Bureau for assistance.

In response to a question regarding Paragraph 3.1(b) of the Report, the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) confirmed that the Council would consider different forms of extensions, not just loft conversions.

RESOLVED:

That the performance information be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.15pm.

Chairman