

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 21st January, 2014

Present:- Councillors Rob Appleyard (Chair), Nathan Hartley (Vice-Chair), Steve Hedges, Brian Simmons and June Player

Also in attendance: Derek Quilter (Divisional Director for Project Management) and Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing) and Jonathan Medlin (Senior Development Officer)

Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning: Councillor Tim Ball

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development: Councillor Ben Stevens

Victor da Cunha, Chief Executive and Louise Swain, Executive Director, Customer Services at Curo

39 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

40 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Steve Hedges gave his apologies for having to arrive slightly late to the Panel meeting.

42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair, Councillor Rob Appleyard declared non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 'Curo Development Update' as he is a non-executive director of Curo. He said that he would ask the Vice-Chair of the Panel, Councillor Nathan Hartley to chair that agenda item.

Councillor Steve Hedges declared non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 'Curo Development Update' as his son works for Curo.

43 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

44 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Mr David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He wished to speak about whom now has responsibility for Southgate and the bus station. He asked if the Council could contact British Land / Aviva in an attempt to rectify some on-going matters. He explained that a leak from the toilets of the bus station was hindering the use of the café and the more important matter of the toilets themselves being fully closed.

He also wished to raise the matter of enforcement of the bus gate on Dorchester Street and hoped that officers would be pursuing this actively.

He then stated his concern and disappointment that the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee had been cancelled at very short notice on January 20th 2014. He explained that the Strategic Economic Plan for the West of England was due to be discussed at that meeting and must still happen prior to it being sent to Government.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development replied that the Economic & Community Development Scrutiny Panel were due to receive a presentation on the Plan at their meeting on January 23rd. He also wished to assure Mr Redgewell that officers were already drafting a response on the matter.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that Southgate was not a Major Project, but would see if officers could aid in contacting the appropriate people to expedite a resolution.

45 MINUTES - 19TH NOVEMBER 2013

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

46 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning addressed the Panel. He stated that he had nothing further to add to the document that had been circulated to the Panel, but would respond to the questions relating to Boat Dwellers from the previous meeting a little later on.

The Chairman asked how the Compulsory Purchase Orders for two empty properties would be funded and what were the next steps that needed to be taken.

The Head of Housing replied that the two neighbouring properties in Weston had been empty for 20 – 30 years. He said that funding was available through the Affordable Housing programme and seen as a capital asset from that budget. This would be the cost of the properties and any fees associated with the purchase.

He added that the intention would then be to dispose of the properties as soon as possible for the purchase price.

He explained that it was hoped that a Registered Provider (RP) would take it over and that one possibility was being pursued alongside funding from the HCA (Homes & Communities Agency). He added that it would be preferred to be let as Social Housing.

The Chairman asked if the properties were eligible for the New Homes Bonus (NHB).

The Head of Housing replied that they would be.

The Chairman asked if that would tip the balance in favour of the Council.

The Head of Housing replied that after accounting for the NHB the Council would have expended around £18,000 – £20,000 on fees associated with the purchase. He asked for the work to be seen in the wider context as if 4 further properties are brought back into use without any financial intervention from the Council the CPO process will become cost neutral.

The Chairman asked for further feedback on this matter later in the year.

The Head of Housing agreed to that proposal. He added that so far 150 properties had been brought back into use across the Council with each one generating the NHB of £6,000.

Councillor June Player if the Council planned to carry out any renovations on the two properties.

The Head of Housing replied that Council would not be doing any work on the properties after they are purchased.

The Chairman asked if enough resources were in place considering the 900 applications for additional licensing approval in respect of HMOs that had been received by the Council.

The Head of Housing replied that they had estimated that 750 – 1,500 applications would be made and so were as confident as they could be at this stage that enough resources were in place.

Councillor Tim Ball read out his responses to the questions raised regarding Boat Dwellers at the last meeting. This Q&A document can be found online as an appendix to these minutes and on the Panel's Minute Book.

The Chairman asked if there was any intent to move any specific recommendation forward.

Councillor Ball replied that there was intent to do so, but that the timing of such work would depend on an allocation of resources.

The Chairman asked if any funds had been set aside within the budget.

Councillor Ball replied that he could not comment any further at this stage.

The Chairman asked that members be made aware of any resource allocation prior to the upcoming budget discussions.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development addressed the Panel. He said he was pleased to see a large amount of activity within B&NES currently. He also wished to highlight some very positive partnership working with the Environment Agency on the Bath Flood Mitigation project.

He said that he had nothing further to add to the document that had been circulated to the Panel.

The Chairman thanked both of the Cabinet Members and associated officers for their updates.

47 CURO DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Victor da Cunha, Chief Executive and Louise Swain, Executive Director, Customer Services at Curo gave a presentation to the Panel. A copy of it will be available online as an appendix to the minutes and on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

Our Strategy

- New homes:
 - Increase range of products, including market sale
 - Commit to building more homes: 250 affordable homes, 250 homes for sale
 - Commit to regeneration

How far have we come?

- Improvements to services
 - Contact Centre
 - Curo Response fleet, equipment and training
 - New neighbourhood management model
 - Welfare Reform – new services

What have we done?

- New supply
 - 173 affordable homes built in B&NES so far
 - 177 affordable homes underway
 - £26m investment in B&NES on providing new homes so far
 - Acquired MoD Foxhill land

The operating environment

- Limited public funding to support affordable homes – providers must generate subsidy through other activities.

Curo's contribution to the vision

- Pipeline of 1,400 new homes over next three years
- Financial capacity for further 4,000 new homes
- Mixture of affordable homes and homes for sale
- Increased focus on estate regeneration

Foxhill MoD Site

- Estimate of 700 new homes (35% social housing)
- Critical in delivering numbers for B&NES

Foxhill Estate

- Around 500 homes out of the 900 on the estate belong to Curo
- Badly designed open space, shops and estate layout
- Lack of amenities, particularly for young people

Our vision for the community

- Integrating the MoD land, Combe Down and the Foxhill estate into one community
- Creating a sustainable neighbourhood with new mixed tenure homes, community facilities, shops, and a range of other legacy outcomes

Community engagement

- A Residents Regeneration Panel has been formed to become involved in the design standards, consultation process and development offer to tenants
- Foxhill Forum – 100 invites have been sent out to businesses and local groups to become involved in the consultation process
- Representatives from both of these groups will then sit on the Foxhill Legacy Forum alongside the Ward Councillors

Timescales

- January – July 2014: Master planning
- 11th / 12th April 2014: Public Exhibition of Initial Masterplan proposals
- 11th / 12th July 2014: Public Exhibition of Final proposals
- 12th / 13th September: Public Exhibition of Planning proposals
- October 2014: Outline Planning Application submitted to the Council
- July 2015: Planning permission granted
- 2016 / 2017: Phase 1 complete

Councillor Steve Hedges asked if they knew at this stage how many houses per hectare would be built and the number of affordable homes that would be built on the site.

Victor da Cunha replied that the level of detail relating to houses per hectare was not known yet and would be likely to be announced as part of the public exhibition in

April. He added that the anticipated split of housing on site was to be 450 for sale and 250 as social housing.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that he was concerned about the prospect of having to build on Green Field Land in the future and said that he felt the number of houses per hectare should be 45.

Victor da Cunha replied that the intention is to make the site sustainable whilst being as bold as possible with our proposals. He added that the Council would need to hold its nerve during the planning process.

Councillor June Player asked if the provision of allotments were planned on the site.

Victor da Cunha replied that it was and formed part of the concept statement drawn up by the Council.

Councillor Rob Appleyard asked when the public would be able to see the master plan.

Victor da Cunha replied that this would be available as part of the public exhibitions planned for April & July.

Louise Swain added that the development architects had a good track record of working with the community. She added that in relation to allotment provision that the wellbeing agenda was at the heart of the development.

Councillor Hartley on behalf of the Panel thanked them both for the presentation.

48 FORMER MOD SITES

The Senior Development Officer introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that each Concept Statement guides how the regeneration of the site will protect the most important parts and deliver viable social, economic and environmental benefits. They outline:

- The vision for the site;
- The key planning and community priorities and requirements in their regeneration;
- How developers should engage with local communities once the sites have been sold and the design and planning of the sites begins.

He added that the Concept Statements are based on sound evidence. They set out realistic requirements and priorities for developers to take into account in any future proposals. As part of their preparation, they were appraised for economic viability, and stakeholder engagement played an important part in shaping them.

He said that planning applications for both the Ensleigh and Warminster Road sites were due in the early part of 2014.

The Chairman asked if the developers of both those sites could be invited to address the Panel at some point in the future.

The Senior Development Officer said that he would be happy to help with that proposal.

Councillor June Player asked if the Ensleigh and Warminster Road sites had made provision for allotments.

The Senior Development Officer replied that allotment provision was identified in the Concept Statement for both sites.

Councillor June Player asked why allotments within B&NES were half the size of the national figure and whether the ratio of 100 homes = 5.6 allotments was true.

The Chairman replied that he felt these were questions that should be addressed to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Councillor David Dixon.

Councillor June Player replied that she would seek the answers from Councillor Dixon. She then asked if the homes described as wheelchair accessible on the Ensleigh site would enable full disabled access around the property.

The Senior Development Officer replied that the properties should be constructed to the Built for Life standard and that he expected that to be complied with.

Councillor June Player asked for further information on the 'Extra Care' facility proposed for Ensleigh.

The Head of Housing replied that these would be properties that have packages of care available to be put in place and developed accordingly with whoever was to live in the property, primarily older people.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Development Officer for his report and for attending the Panel.

49 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He said that he would analyse the responses from Councillor Ball on Boat Dwellers to see if any further work was required by the Panel at this stage. He added that he had recently received correspondence on the matter from Dr Ian Orpen of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and that he would pass this to Councillor Eleanor Jackson and the other members of the Wellbeing Panel.

He stated that he expected the reports on Council Land Availability and Leased Housing Stock to be delivered in March.

The Head of Housing commented that these two reports will more than likely be consolidated into one. He added that the Commuted Sums report would attempt to highlight the process to the Panel and begin to establish a way of making sure that they are properly utilised.

The Chairman replied that he would welcome that report in May.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if the £39k worth of savings identified in the MTSRP report in November had resulted in any service reductions.

The Head of Housing replied that the savings had been made through a reduction in staff hours and redundancies.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services