

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY, 13 MARCH
2008**

MEMBERS

* Cllr J D Hawkins – Chairman

* Cllr R C Steer – Vice-Chairman

* Cllr J Brazil

* Cllr M J Howarth

* Cllr B F Cane

* Cllr C W Jones

* Cllr S E Cooper

∅ Cllr L P Jones

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance and participating:

Cllrs M F Saltern and R J Tucker

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllrs M J Hicks and H D Bastone

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Director (Community)

Item 5 (minute reference CPDG.21/07 below refers): Countryside Project Officer

Items 7 and 8 (minute reference CPDG.23/07 and CPDG.24/07 below refers): Head
of Community Regeneration, Affordable Housing Manager and
Affordable Housing Enabling Officer

CPDG.19/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Policy Development Group held on 10 January 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPDG.20/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr C W Jones declared a personal interest in item 5: 'Countryside Recreation and Access Strategy' (minute CPDG.21/07 below refers), by virtue of his work with Natural England and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

Cllr B F Cane declared a prejudicial interest in item 7: 'Affordable Housing Review and Update' (minute CPDG.23/07 below refers), by virtue of his ownership of a site referred to in the exempt appendix and left the meeting and did not take part in the debate on this item.

Cllr R C Steer declared a prejudicial interest in item 7: 'Affordable Housing Review and Update' (minute CPDG.23/07 below refers), specifically in the matter referring to the Dairy Crest, Totnes site by virtue of his association with this site and left the meeting during the debate on this site only.

CPDG.21/07 **COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION AND ACCESS STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to a report which updated Members on the range of actions achieved through the Countryside Recreation and Access Strategy in the past and drew attention to the fact that the Council now had a number of existing Strategic Policies in place that delivered the themes contained in the report.

The report concluded that a great deal had been achieved through the Strategy and efforts of the Countryside Project staff. Since other strategic documents had now been established, it was felt that the need for this strategy had ended. Much of the work continued to be relevant to the Council and its partners and would be taken forward by Landscape and Leisure officers as appropriate, notably through the Public Open Space and Green Tourism work programmes, particularly when external funding allowed.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) funding being difficult to obtain without a Countryside Recreation and Access Strategy. In response, officers informed Members that other strategies such as the Public Spaces Strategy were more than adequate to satisfy any funding criteria.
- b) paragraph four of the presented report. It was a Member's belief that the strategies that were stated in the presented report only covered parts of the South Hams District for example, the Dartmoor National Park Plan only covered land within the Dartmoor National Park boundary. The Member also felt that having a jigsaw of strategies would put future funding bids in jeopardy. Officers reassured Members that the Strategies that were in place were robust enough to secure future funding, and concluded that a number of the themes contained within the Countryside Recreation and Access Strategy were also included on the Public Spaces Strategy.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the achievements delivered over the past ten years by the Countryside Recreation and Access Strategy be noted;
- 2) That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that a further strategy document was not required.

CPDG.22/07 REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S COMPULSORY PURCHASE POSITION STATEMENT

Consideration was given to a report that sought Member Support for the retention of the existing Compulsory Purchase Position Statement (CPPS).

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) the number of times compulsory purchase powers had been utilised. Members were informed that compulsory purchase powers had been invoked once, with negotiation being the preferred method. However, by having an adopted CPPS, the negotiation position was strengthened and sent the message that the Council were prepared to pursue their priorities;
- b) whether compulsory purchase powers could be used to acquire an exception site. In response, Members were informed that a clear policy framework was generally required and as exception sites were not identified in any planning documents, the use of compulsory purchase powers may be inappropriate. If there was to be an inquiry, the Council would have to demonstrate that extensive negotiation and consultation had been undertaken before compulsory purchase powers had been used;
- c) the CPPS having no reference to exception sites or departure sites and whether these should be included, or whether Government should be lobbied to amend primary legislation;

The following recommendation was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and upon being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**:

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to:-

- i) support the retention of the Council's existing Compulsory Purchase Position Statement in its current format; and
- ii) request supporting guidance from Government to promote the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers to address the needs and the well being of rural communities.

CPDG.23/07 **AFFORDABLE HOUSING REVIEW AND UPDATE**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the progress of housing delivery. The report also highlighted the range of affordable housing projects that were being undertaken. The report concluded that despite the challenges of the past year, delivery had increased significantly, with the progress being made on key Local Development Framework (LDF) documents likely to improve delivery further.

Officers drew Members' attention to a number of challenges that officers had faced since 2006, including the findings of two separate Inspectors' Reports and restructuring of the housing service.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) the hard work and dedication of the officers;
- b) the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) withdrawing the funding for the Rural Housing Enabler Programme which was relied upon to support housing needs surveys;
- c) officers prioritising projects that were most likely to be achieved. Members were informed that priorities had accordingly been shown for the sites contained in the exempt appendix;
- d) the Executive possibly releasing funds to aid the progression of key documents. Officers expressed a cautionary note that producing policies and strategies could not be guaranteed to ensure housing delivery as other factors also affected affordable housing provision.

Members wished to discuss the exempt appendix that accompanied the agenda report. It was therefore:-

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

Officers and Members then proceeded to discuss the appendix to the presented report which referred to specific sites and the progress on negotiations. Once all Members were satisfied that they had no further questions in relation to the content of this appendix, it was then:

RESOLVED

That the public and press be re-admitted.

Members felt the pressure on officers was immense and that the Executive should look at providing funds to find ways to alleviate such pressure. Therefore an amendment to the proposed recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to:-

- i) endorse the priority areas for action as set out in the presented report; and
- ii) look at providing funding from existing reserves for further support to meeting the Council's number one priority of delivering affordable housing.

CPDG.24/07 HOUSING STRATEGY – PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Members received an update on performance in delivery of the Housing Strategy (as attached at Appendix A).

A Member enquired what progress had been made in relation to the Sub-Market Rent initiative. The Group was informed that the initiative was progressing well and that Dartington Housing Association had purchased some properties to be used for this initiative.

(Meeting started at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.45 pm)

Chairman

Appendix A

HOUSING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – March 2008

New Affordable Housing Provision

Housing Starts during 2007/08 = 53
Housing Completions during 2007/08 = 69

Other Housing Issues

National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) Allocations

The Housing Corporations National Affordable Housing Programme allocations were announced during March 2008. Three schemes were supported by the Council of which 2 received an allocation of around £2.5m. The unsuccessful bid was for a scheme deemed to be premature in terms of its planning status. It is anticipated that this scheme will be re-submitted through the next mini bid round which is due to take place during April 2008.

Affordable Housing Development Plan Document & Supplementary Planning Document

The consultation period for the Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (AH-DPD) and Supplementary Planning Document has now closed. A number of responses were received from Parish Councils, developers, land agents and other interested parties. The AH-DPD will be subject to an examination in public during June 2008.

Beacon Update

The Beacon Peer Support Fund was awarded to the Council to undertake research to inform, develop and test national policy. Progress on the three projects is as follows;

- Second Homes Study

The Council has received the final draft report and is currently discussing the recommendations with the reports author, David Couttie Associates. It is anticipated that the report will be formally published during the summer 2008.

A sub regional dissemination event is also being considered. Members will be advised of the event in due course.

- Land Leasing Options

Adams Integra were commissioned to undertake research to consider land leasing as an alternative option to encourage landowners to release land for affordable housing. The first draft report has now been completed. The project costs for this research were lower than anticipated. As the research is funded through the Beacon grant award, the Council have extended the

research to include a site specific assessment of the practicalities of land leasing. It is hoped that this additional element of research may lead to a land leasing deal being secured locally.

- Community Land Trusts (CLT);

The CLT project is nearing completion with the first draft report expected early in the next financial year. A full update will be provided to members in due course.

Alan Robinson
March 2008