

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2007**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr J S Beer – Chairman

\* Cllr B F Cane – Vice-Chairman

\* Cllr B J Boughton

\* Cllr P H Cook

\* Cllr L A Facy

\* Cllr V A Harvey

\* Cllr J D Hawkins

∅ Cllr M A Roadknight

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:  
Cllrs P W Hitchins, M F Saltern, I P Steer and A R Vale

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Director (Community), Development Surveyor, Affordable Housing Enabling Officer and Planning and Affordable Housing Officer

**CPDG.30/06 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Policy Development Group held on 11 January 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to it being recorded that the Strategic Director (Operations) was in attendance as opposed to the Strategic Director (Community).

**CPDG.31/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none was made.

**CPDG.32/06 CP1 TEAM PROGRESS REPORT**

A report was considered which enabled Members to monitor the CP1 team's progress against an agreed action plan and sought the Group's support for the proposed courses of action to enable the team to continue to make progress and take ownership of the plan.

The report concluded that the current work programme of the CP1 team was developing and progressing in line with expectations and invited Members to comment at this early stage to help ensure fitness for purpose and value for money.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The Group was provided with an update on the current position with regard to the affordable housing policy and was informed that a more detailed explanatory paper would be enclosed in the Members' Bulletin on 19 January 2007. Officers advised that external legal advice was currently being sought to assess whether the current policy difficulties could be overcome through the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, which was intended to be produced by 31 March 2007;
- (b) It was noted that all potential sites and landowners were treated without prejudice by the CP1 team. This was to ensure that any planning application submitted was dealt with fairly. Officers advised that surety of delivery could not be given until planning permission had been granted. The Group was also assured that sites brought forward for affordable housing, particularly exception and departure sites, were subject to specific controls, to ensure the agreed affordable housing was delivered;
- (c) A Member highlighted the importance of researching best practice elsewhere and promoting our own best practice work. Whilst the Group was advised that officers would continue to research best practice, the importance of striking a balance between research and ensuring the actual construction of affordable housing was emphasised;
- (d) The Group felt it to be encouraging that 13 of the 28 sites presented had the potential to proceed. Members were also informed that now the process was in place, new potential sites could be evaluated as and when they were submitted. The CP1 team also had an internal target whereby they would aim to conclude the first stage of the feasibility assessment within a 28 day period;
- (e) In order to deliver affordable housing, the need for community support, land, planning permission and funding was emphasised. To obtain community support, Members reiterated the need to regularly liaise and engage with local Ward Member(s) and local town and parish councils. The Group felt that there was a requirement for a protocol to be implemented which would include working practices for Member involvement/awareness during the process and the communication process for advising landowners and local Ward Member(s) of whether a site was physically deliverable. Officers agreed to design a protocol to incorporate Members comments, which would be presented to a future Group meeting for consideration;

It was then:

**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 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

Officers and Members proceeded to consider and debate the summary of initial conclusions on identified sites (exempt appendix C of the presented report refers).

- (f) The Group was advised that those sites which were considered to have potential to proceed would be prioritised. It was highly unlikely that a site that failed the first stage of the process would ever subsequently be deemed deliverable. The first stage identified issues that would prove fatal to developing that particular site for housing. It was noted that should a site be deemed to be undeliverable, landowners would be provided with an explanation of and the reasoning behind the decision. The Group was also advised that where possible, a suggested way forward could be discussed (e.g. the landowner could own an alternative, more suitable site in the vicinity);
- (g) Members were reminded of the probity rules and the need to be cautious in their involvement with the promotion of potential sites, as they could ultimately be debarred from being involved during the planning application process. In addition, Members were advised of the need to consult with the Monitoring Officer on whether they had any potential interests to declare on any possible sites. In such instances where there was a conflict of interest, Members felt they should adopt the same practice as on Development Control matters whereby an adjoining Ward Member be appointed to represent the local community;
- (h) The importance of balancing the need to address the local housing need whilst complying with national, regional and local housing policies was stressed;

Once all Members were satisfied that they had no further questions in relation to the exempt appendix, it was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the public and press be re-admitted.

- (i) Concerns were expressed regarding the loss of shared ownership properties to the open market. Officers advised of some of the legal mechanisms available and that where any receipt was received, a Registered Social Landlord had a duty to recycle the monies to provide affordable housing. The Group acknowledged that whilst there were methods of protecting shared ownership market housing for local people, it was a complicated legal process and tight restrictions could present difficulties in obtaining reasonable rate mortgages for such purposes.

**RECOMMENDED**

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that:

the report be noted and comments (as recorded above) be noted on the proposed CP1 action plan, the site assessment process, the initial results from the site assessment process and the public information leaflet about shared ownership.

**CPDG.33/06 HOUSING STRATEGY – PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

The Group considered a tabled summary paper on the Council's housing performance, which was a standing item on the Group's agenda (see Appendix A).

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) new affordable housing provision. Partly as a consequence of the loss of the second homes Council Tax monies, the Group was informed that the amount of affordable housing to be constructed during 2007 was likely to be less in comparison to the numbers built in 2006;
- (b) the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Officers advised that partners could make another bid towards funding a Devon wide bid, from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), to introduce a Devon and Cornwall Choice Based Letting Scheme and that a meeting was to be held to discuss this matter. It was confirmed to the Group that such a scheme would not override the Council's nomination rights to Tor Homes.

In conclusion, the Group wished for its appreciation for the hard work undertaken by all the housing officers to be noted.

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm).

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Chairman

## **Appendix A**

### **HOUSING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – December 2006**

#### **Housing Register & nominations to RSLs**

Number of Households on the Housing Register = 1697 (-11)  
Number of Households with more than 250 points = 587 (+7)  
Number of Nominations to RSLs = 15 (-4) 123 since April 2006

#### **Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation**

Number of Private Sector Leased Properties = 70 (-1)  
Number of Families with Children in B&B = 0 (=)  
Number of Households in B&B = 12 (+3)

#### **New Affordable Housing Provision**

Number of New Homes completed = 2 (=2)  
Number of New Homes on site = 63 (+16)

#### **Other Housing Issues**

- The Devon Wide Bid for funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to introduce a Devon and Cornwall Choice Based Letting Scheme was unsuccessful. The Feedback letter from the DCLG highlighted the following issues with the bid:
  - It was an expensive bid (£300,000);
  - Concern was raised that Plymouth was not ready to take part in the scheme
  - The fact that North Cornwall would not sign up to the scheme.
  - Some detail was lacking such as how the scheme would cater for access and support for vulnerable groups.

Exeter, who were leading the bid on behalf of the other authorities intend to hold a further meeting with partners shortly to discuss the way forward. DCLG will be launching a further bid round in 2007 and we have been invited to develop the bid and then resubmit the bid for consideration.

- The Devon Wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment is now in the public domain. The assessment came up with 14 recommendations to be considered. Across Devon there is a shortage of both permanent and transit sites in South Hams the report identified that there was a requirement for 42 pitches rising to 51 by 2011. The report emphasised that a Devon Wide approach was needed.

#### **Notes**

All Performance information is based on the position at the end of December 2006

Alan Robinson

January 2006