

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 15 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

R J Dolley (Chairman)  
G Barnell, J Bartlett, J Cairney, S J Clist,  
D R Coren and S Pugh

### **Apology**

#### **Councillor**

R F Radford

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillors**

Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R Evans and B G J Warren

### **Also Present**

#### **Officers**

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Claire Fry (Housing Services Operations Manager), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

## **49 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr R F Radford.

Cllr Cairney was not able to attend the meeting in person but attended via Zoom.

## **50 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No members of the public were present and none had registered a question in advance.

## **51 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Cllr S E Pugh declared a personal interest in that he had received correspondence regarding the 70 proposed homes at the Post Hill site in Tiverton.

No other interests were declared under this item.

## **52 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

### 53 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman formally thanked Cllr Mrs Eileen Andrews for the service she had given to the Homes PDG between May 2011 and February 2022. She had always been keen, helpful and provided useful comment. This was endorsed by the Vice Chairman and the Group as a whole.

### 54 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS FOR 70 HOMES AT POST HILL, TIVERTON (00:07:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper \* from the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change providing an update on the progress with the development of land at Post Hill, Tiverton.

The following key points of information were provided:

- The site was on the eastern edge of Post Hill just south of the A361.
- The proposal was for 70 dwellings, 8 for social rent, 62 for affordable rent.
- The land was now in Council ownership.
- The ambition was for Passivhaus House Accreditation providing very low energy homes for years to come.
- The map showed various points of note including the underground water mains, surface water attenuation areas, access roads, footpath links and and Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP).
- Talks were underway with Devon County Council regarding the purchase of additional land to improve highway safety and visibility splays.
- Public engagement events would be held towards the end of April at Tiverton Golf Club to which all Members would also be invited.
- The site did not lend itself to external funding and was the subject of a S106 agreement.
- The 70 homes would be retained as part of the Council's HRA stock.

Consideration was given to:

- Whether there was any scope to re-examine the 8/62 split between social and rented housing? However, it was explained that it had been an exceptionally expensive site to bring forward and decisions had had to be made about what was sustainable for the HRA.
- A desire to complete the project to predicted timescales if not before.
- The size of gardens provided was applauded.
- The opportunity this and other projects provided the Council to re-balance the under provision of Council houses in recent decades.
- Recent national figures for a 3 bedroom house showed that affordable rent per month was in the region of £630 compared to market rent which was approximately £983.
- The vital need for a joined up approach with other agencies such as Devon County Council and our own Planning Authority when it came to matters such as road safety.

Note: \* Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

## 55 HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-2025 DELIVERY (00:42:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update on how delivery of the strategy will be monitored and provided for going forward.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The 40 objectives and targets within the strategy.
- An officer delivery group had been reconvened which would include input from the Director for Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation as well as the Cabinet Member for Housing and property Services.
- The PDG would be updated twice a year on progress with delivering the housing strategy, in May and November.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Group needed to see the phasing proposals for the schemes coming forward. It was confirmed that when that detail was available it would be shared with the Group.
- The need for the Council to engage with all manner of other agencies to bring schemes forward such as the NHS, Homes England, neighbouring authorities and Town and Parish Councils. All matters needed to be given sufficient consideration.

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

## 56 MODULAR HOUSING SCHEME UPDATE (00:55:00)

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing provided the Group with a verbal update on several recent and future modular housing schemes.

This included the following key points:

- The St Andrews scheme application had been approved last month and had passed through the legal stage. The Council was now in a position to award a contract later this week.
- The Shapland Place application would be determined by the Planning Committee the following day. Both schemes were for social rent.

Consideration was given to:

- Contractors would be appointed on a 'scheme by scheme' basis, The Council was not bound to use one contractor for all schemes.
- The Group could be informed about future potential projects but due to having to be careful about naming sites, these discussions might need to be held in Part II.
- A request that 'Homes' targets and 'Planning' targets be amalgamated and shown as an overall figure presented to Members as part of performance information so that Members could see information regarding an integrated

delivery. It was confirmed that this integrated information would be presented in 2021/2022 performance data provided to the Group.

Note: Cllr R J Dolley declared a personal interest in that the Shapland application was in his Ward and he would be speaking to it as Ward Member at the Planning Committee the following day.

#### 57 **MID DEVON HOUSING DELIVERY REPORT AND UPDATE (01:05:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update to Members on tenancy and building services performance and activity within Mid Devon Housing.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- This was the first combined report covering the tenancy function as well as building repairs and maintenance now coming under the umbrella of Mid Devon Housing.
- The format of future reports may need to change as a result of tenancy satisfaction measures which were now out for public consultation.

The Group discussed the fact that performance data in Annexe 1 showed very good results especially in the area of debt collection. Officers now engaged with tenants at a much earlier stage, providing advice and support wherever they could as early as possible. As a result there were far fewer fraud cases and far fewer evictions. Officers were congratulated for the approach taken and the effort it involved.

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

#### 58 **WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022 - 2023 (01:13:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the work programme \* for 2022/23.

The following issues were raised as areas that the Group also needed to discuss in the short and medium term:

- MEES which stood for 'Minimum Energy Efficiencies Standard'.
- The Ukrainian Refugee crisis and the extent to which the Council would need to become involved in providing accommodation and support to displaced individuals and families. It was recognised that new information regarding the resettlement scheme was being released by the Government on a daily basis and very little detail had been provided to local authorities at the current time. Officers would do all they could but there was serious concern regarding the extent and capacity of current available resources within the Council without some additional help from Government. It was hoped more information would be available at the May meeting.
- Community Housing schemes in rural locations and the need for a report from Principal Housing Enabling and Forward Planning Officer as part of the work programme for the coming year.

Note: \* Work programme previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

59 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 - 2022 (01:27:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the draft report \* from the Chairman summarising the work of the Homes Policy Development Group for 2021/22. A final copy of the report would be submitted to full Council on 27 April 2022.

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

60 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:28:00)**

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting the Group requested that they receive an update with regard to the Ukrainian Refugee crisis and the role of the local authority within this.

It was stated that the latest ONS figures (Office for National Statistics) showed that between 42% and 56% of pre-tax incomes were being used on rental and associated rental properties. A request was made by Cllr Clist that this be born in mind by officers when writing future reports given that inflation was also rapidly rising.

(The meeting ended at 3.45 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**