

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee **Date:** Tuesday, 28 September 2021

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 7.19pm

Members Present: H Whitbread (Chairman), A Patel and J Philip

Other Councillors: D Wixley

Apologies: N Avey and N Bedford

Officers Present: R Hoyte (Service Manager - Housing Development), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), N Cole (Corporate Communications Officer) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

10. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet, and would be capable of repeated viewing, which could infringe their human and data protection rights.

11. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no substitute members present at the meeting.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

13. MINUTES

Resolved:

- (1) That the minutes of the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee held on the 14 June 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRESS REPORT - PHASES 3 - 5

Rochelle Hoyte, Service Manager, Housing Development presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and recommended that the Council House Building Progress Report - Phases 3 to 5 be noted. She advised that the report set out the progress that had been made across Phases 3 to 5 of the Council House Building Programme and that they were either completed, on-site or were currently being procured.

The report was as set out in the Agenda on pages 15-88. There was an update to the report which had arisen since the agenda had been published:

Phase 4.3

Woollard Street, Waltham Abbey

The report stated that: 'Woollard Street start on site was expected September 2021 following contract signing, however this was now delayed due to pre-start planning conditions for landscape and materials. Rear access options under review, alternative options being agreed and costs to be confirmed which are expected to be circa £50-60k. Start on site now potentially December 2021 – January 2022.'

She confirmed that the alternative arrangements had now been agreed and the costs had been confirmed at £41k which was considerably less than the expected cost of £50-60k. The drawing and plans for this site were now being detailed.

Financial Reporting

The Service Director for Housing Services, Deborah Fenton had met with the Council's Finance department concerning the HRA Business Plan and would be meeting with the Portfolio Holder to discuss, in the next couple of weeks.

Councillor Wixley asked if Service Manager could give some more information on the Homes England audit with regard to the Kirby Close site in Loughton.

R Hoyte advised that Homes England were governed by the Government body who provide funding for housing, therefore the Phase 4.2 sites were awarded grant funding of around £1.7m, grant funding meant that the Council did not have to pay anything back to Homes England. Throughout this process, Homes England would inspect and review, at random, some of the different schemes that had been awarded grant funding and Kirby Close was chosen as one of the schemes that they would inspect. The inspection and audit of Kirby Close had taken place and there were two queries that they asked for a response to, we were now waiting for Homes England to come back and give the result of the audit. Once received I will share with the Portfolio Holder to pass the information on.

Councillor A Patel referred to page 33 of the agenda, Key Dates Milestones Summary and asked about the last column headed, Comments – Change Since Last Report where it stated 'Progress slow due to resource availability' and advised that at the last meeting he had suggested that the Council could consider having a storage depot to store the materials so that it wouldn't impinge upon the delivery of the sites and asked where we were with that suggestion as this was going to be an ongoing concern specifically over the next two to three years. He then went on to ask if the contractors were confident that they would be able to deliver on these revised dates.

R Hoyte informed the Cabinet Committee that there wasn't an industry shortage of materials or labour and advised that she had recently had a meeting with the contractors on Phase 4.1 who informed her that the trade issues were all around being able to get plumbers, plasterers and carpenters. The contractors were working with agencies to source the required staff and the issues they were coming up against was that there was either no availability of those trades or they do not have the required high standard of workmanship that the Council required to maintain the quality. With regards to materials there was one problem that the contractors are unable to source ridge tiles and were therefore looking as finding an alternative

replacement that was available so that the schemes would not be delayed any further.

Regarding the delivery dates of the schemes, as things currently stand, the revised dates are what the contractors are working to and some of the sites have come forwards by a couple of weeks. This whole situation was being monitored weekly within the progress meetings.

Councillor A Patel asked the Service Manager if these delays would affect the Council's bonus in meeting those targets as the Council were supposed to be delivering an amount of homes every year.

R Hoyte advised that everything that has currently slipped was still within the delivery time frame for the financial year so would still be achieved. Homes England are fully aware of the industry problems, so in terms of Phase 4.2 where there was grant funding, any dates that slip beyond the dates that the Council have to commit to for Homes England they are working on a plan to allow for slippage time to account for the fact that this was an industry problem with the supply of materials and trade. We will wait to hear from Homes England for what those dates look like.

Councillor A Patel asked if the delays and shortage of material would impact on the overall costing and were the Council still going to be within the agreed budgets.

R Hoyte advised that presently there hadn't been any cost implications as a result of the material issues any alternatives that were being looked at were not over the amounts that had already been agreed as part of the budget. Phase 4.2 was £127k under budget and Phase 4.1 was £17k under budget at this time.

Councillor J Philip queried recommendation 2:

'To agree that new development names where required between reporting periods can be agreed through the portfolio holder as and when needed.'

He stated that as we had the planning schedule for when handover should be delivered decisions around the new development names because its required between reporting periods, surely we should be sufficiently organised that we could make those decisions before the handover dates and bring it to the Cabinet Committee as normal.

R Hoyte advised that there was only one outstanding for confirmation on a name was Pick Hill which was currently being discussed at present and was currently with the street name and numbering department for them to confirm. The plan was that the names would still be brought to the Cabinet Committee presently every development has a name besides Pick Hill and the timing has worked out where it had landed in between the meetings as we have just started the application process, which had been discussed with the Portfolio Holder but we do not have an answer on the application as yet.

The Chairman advised that the Pick Hill development was going to be named after former Councillor Syd Stavrou but we are awaiting permission from her family and that was part of the delay with that process.

I would also just like to add that the Cabinet are going on tour in November around all of the different Council sites and looking at some of the developments that the Council are moving forward.

Decision:

- (1) That the contents of the Progress Report on Phases 3 to 5 of the Council House Building Programme be noted and presented to the Cabinet in line with the Terms of Reference of the Council House Building Cabinet Committee; and
- (2) That members considered and agreed that new development names, where required between reporting periods, could be agreed through the Portfolio Holder as and when needed.

Reason for Decision:

Set out in its Terms of Reference, the Council House Building Cabinet Committee was to monitor and report to the Council, on an annual basis the progress and expenditure concerning the Council House Building Programme. The report sets out the progress made since reported at the last meeting on the 14 June 2021.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The report was on the progress made since last reported on 14 June 2021 and was for noting purposes only. There were no other options for action.

15. PARKING - NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND HOUSING ESTATES

The Chairman advised that parking was always a contentious issue when delivering new developments and she had been particularly conscious of the Council's responsibilities within the Local Plan.

Rochelle Hoyte, Service Manager, Housing Development presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and advised that there were no updates to the report on pages 89-100 of the agenda and recommended that members of the Cabinet Committee considered and agreed approval for parking requirements to be determined on a case to case basis.

The report had come about by the way the Council had tried to manage parking within existing estates and thinking about parking in the new developments going forward. There were issues with the Local Plan in terms of how the Council manage parking and how much parking was to be provided for the new developments. Every site was different so the need for a blanket approach was not the way forward.

Councillor A Patel stated that he was seeking reassurance that where there were bungalow sites would there be allocated parking for those bungalows because the likelihood was that the bungalow would have a disabled person residing there.

R Hoyte stated that all bungalow sites or bungalow units on development sites would have allocated parking, part of the problem had been within the Estates and Land team actually allocating parking spaces for residents had been something that wasn't on the plan before. She advised that she had highlighted this problem in the report on page 89-90.

Councillor A Patel asked if there was a policy or a clause set for the number of electrical charging points per development or dwelling.

R Hoyte stated that the Council did not have an electrical charge point policy per se, but as part of becoming more carbon neutral, the Council were looking at, within our

developments, of putting in the infrastructure and the electrical charging parking points. Discussions were presently taking place around how that was charged back and how they would operate and from what company. It was discussed and agreed that the infrastructure for charging points would always be installed on new developments and at a later date, if it was required, the installation of the charging points could be added.

Councillor J Philip advised that the Council did have a policy on electrical charging points for new development which was very clearly set out in the Local Plan. As we go through planning that should be a condition on all planning permissions issued.

He stated that we had to make sure when we are doing things in our housing estates that we don't overly favour people more than we would a non-housing residents. When you buy a house and there was a space outside on the road that the space does not belong to you, anyone can park there and we have to be careful that we don't overrule and give particular preference to some. When people need a space from an ability point of view that makes complete sense, we just need to make sure that we get a good balance.

The Chairman asked if there was any funding that the Council could access particularly looking at more carbon neutral developments in terms of providing the electrical charging spaces.

R Hoyte advised that there was a Sustainability team that was quite new to the Epping structure and they were looking at the different types of grants that were available and we are waiting for the to filter through to us to ask what we can and cannot apply for and how we could use these grants in our new developments.

The Chairman highlighted that parking on grass verges and the damage this was doing to the verges was becoming an issue all over the district. She asked if officers could look in more depth around the protection of grass verges and also where necessary, potentially using the space as appropriate for parking. She advised that she would discuss this with the officers offline.

Decision:

- (1) That members considered and agreed approval for parking requirements to be determined on a case by case basis for new developments as well as Housing estates parking management.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Set out in its Terms of Reference, the Council House Building Cabinet Committee was to monitor and report to the Council, on an annual basis progress and expenditure concerning the Council House Building Programme. This report reviews parking.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

There were no other options considered for action.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no other matters of urgent business for consideration.

17. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no business for consideration which would necessitate the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN