

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council Housebuilding Cabinet **Date:** Tuesday, 8 March 2022
Committee

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 7.30 pm

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

Members Present (Virtually): None

Other Councillors: Councillors S Heap and D Wixley

Other Councillors (Virtual): Councillors R Brookes

Apologies: N Avey

Officers Present: R Hoyte (Service Manager - Housing Development) and J Leither (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers Present (Virtually): L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer)

26. 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.

27. Substitute Members

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

28. Declarations of Interest

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

29. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee held on the 13 December 2022 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRESS REPORT - PHASES 4-5

Rochelle Hoyte, Service Manager, Housing Development presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and advised that there were further updates to the published report.

Phase 4.1

Page 10 of the agenda, the handover date for Chequers Road (A) and Chester Road, Loughton had been delayed until the 29 March 2022 due to BT fibre installation delays.

Phase 4.2

Page 11 of the agenda, the handover date for Hornbeam Close (B), Buckhurst Hill will hand over a day earlier on the 28 March and Beechfield Walk, Waltham Abbey was delayed until the 23 March due to supply shortages for the roof works.

Councillor N Bedford referred to page 10, Phase 4.1 and asked what the 5th column referred to where it stated 56 and 53 etc.

R Hoyte advised that it referenced the build period in weeks but some of those would now be over that period as some of the handover dates had slipped.

Councillor N Bedford referred to Queensway, Ongar and advised that he had visited that site and stated that it was a very good development and supported the use of the land for the building of bungalows.

He stated that Phase 4.4, Ladyfields and Chequers Road (B), Loughton with a total of 24 units, it was referenced in the report that a planning committee date was awaited and he confirmed that he had spoken with the Head of Planning who advised that there was an SAC issue that needed to be sorted out.

Councillor A Patel referred to a delay on one of the sites due to the Clerk of Works retiring and asked for each phase did the Council not appoint just one Clerk of Works to oversee all of the different sites or was it tendered on a site by site basis.

R Hoyte advised that KPA covered the whole of Phase 4 but the Clerk of Works retired and with the current framework there was only one Clerk of Works option, which meant that she had to go outside of the framework. Someone had now been appointed and procurement were in the midst preparing the contract.

Councillor A Patel referred to page 21 of the agenda (page 5 of Report No. 29) and stated that when the House Building projects started Officers always tried to learn from previous mistakes along the way to eradicate the potential for variances, he noted that there had been supply chain issues. He referred to the columns being shown titled Initial Build Cost Estimate to the Latest Pre-Tender Estimates and the Variance from Initial Estimate and asked apart from supply chain issues what other reasons were there for the discrepancies.

R Hoyte advised that this question had been raised before and it was a case of contamination issues, foundations and piling and the choices that had been made. As these were ongoing you will see the same issues, Phases 4.1 and 4.2 were within their contingency so on individual schemes there had been some overspend which have been covered with contingencies and Section 106 contributions and learning from those experiences for Phase 5.

Councillor J Philip referred to page 12 of the agenda, Phase 4.3 Pentlow Way where it showed a started date in March 22 with a handover in June 22 and asked if this was correct.

R Hoyte advised that it was an error and should read a handover date of June 2023.

Councillor D Wixley referred to page 9 of the agenda the second paragraph under the Executive Summary which read:

“I am pleased to announce that we received a green grade with no breaches on our first Homes England compliance Audit. The team worked exceptionally hard during the audit process and I am very pleased with this outcome.”

He asked if the officer could explain what a ‘green grade’ meant.

R Hoyte advised that it was a grade awarded by Homes England which meant the Council had Homes England grant funding on all of the Phase 4.2 projects and randomly Homes England would select a particular scheme to be audited. One of our schemes was selected for Kirby Close where they did a review of all documentation, they go onsite to visit and speak with contractors. It was the first audit of one of EFDC schemes and got awarded a green grade

Councillor Wixley asked if they looked at all the green aspects of a phase and that was why it was awarded.

R Hoyte stated that it wasn’t awarded on green aspects of the phase, it was awarded because the Council had been compliant with meeting Homes England grant funding requirements. It was largely to do with our paperwork and were we keeping all of our documents in order, making the right choices for the development site and was the site being delivered with what had been agreed.

Councillor D Wixley referred to Phase 5 and asked when it would progress to planning applications.

R Hoyte advised that officers were in the progress of consultation with residents, councillors and would soon be contacting Parish and Town Councils regarding some of the proposals therefore there were not any confirmed dates until the consultations had ended and the design elements were worked on. She estimated that in three to four months they would know more details and would report back.

Councillor A Patel stated that he noted some of the delays were due to the Highways Authorities and the utility companies and asked when the project forecast was done should we not be bringing these issues forwards so it did not add to delays in the future.

R Hoyte advised that this was difficult to manage because there was no control over the diaries of the Highways Authorities and utility companies in some instances we have been given dates and at the very last minute they have been cancelled. This particular period has been difficult for the utility companies due to them having a huge backlog.

Councillor S Heap stated that his question was in relation to Phase 5, Hornbeam (A) where some of the residents had received notification of the plans already and that he wasn’t fully aware of the plans. He advised that the garages going would seriously affect a lot of the residents particularly those living in Cascade Close. He asked if

digging up the gardens or the grass verges in front of those houses, to let those residents park on their forecourt could be looked at.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that she and Councillor A Patel had done a site visit last year and there had been a number of legal conversations with the residents as to how they might be able to find a way forward because it had proven to be difficult. She stated that she was happy to take this offline to discuss.

R Hoyte stated that due to legal reasons she would not comment about this development but advised that the consultation was to give residents the opportunity to feed back on why they oppose to the proposals.

Councillor S Heap thanked the officer but advised that some of the residents who should have had the consultation were missed out.

R Hoyte advised that she was aware of this and the officer who sent the original consultation out would now be sending the ones missed out by the end of the week.

Councillor H Whitbread stated that consultants were being used in relation to the management reports and as we move forward would we be looking to do this in-house to cut costs.

R Hoyte advised that more of the consultants work would be done in house as the programme was growing there was the capacity there to manage that work as the team would also grow with it.

Councillor H Whitbread stated that there had been some really good completions and where we looking to do some communications around what we are doing in terms of Council House Building.

R Hoyte advised that she had started doing a lot more on the internet as this has never been done before and that she had spoken with the Communications Team around what was being put out each time there was a handover and everyone will be able to see what we were doing and what was coming out of this programme.

Councillor H Whitbread highlighted the recent bungalow scheme and stated that this was an exciting scheme as it was a new type of property that the Council have delivered and in a good location as there was a large population of elderly people in the Shelley ward.

Councillor D Wixley referred to page 13 of the agenda, paragraph 22 and stated that there was reference to a number of sites which have been dropped since the review of Phase 5 and advises that these are attached within the report for reference and asked if the Officer could direct him to where that was referenced in the agenda.

R Hoyte advised that there was a list in the management report on page 83 of the agenda and confirmed that the sites listed had been removed from the programme.

Decision:

That the contents of the Progress Report on Phases 4 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.

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 which concerned the Council House Building Programme. The report set out the progress made since last reported at the meeting on 13 December 2021.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

There were no other options for action.

31. PHASE 5 SITES TO BE APPROPRIATED

Rochelle Hoyte, Service Manager, Housing Development presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and advised that appropriation was the procedure under the Local Government Act 1972 and Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to change the purpose for which the land was held for one statutory purpose to another, provided that the land was no longer required for the purpose for which it was held immediately before the appropriation.

She stated as part of the Council House Building process the schemes within Phase 5 needed to be appropriated to show the difference of use. If any of the sites did not go ahead for building they would be reviewed as some of the garage sites were not fit for purpose, in that they were not big enough to hold a car, therefore these sites were being looked at for extra parking spaces with electrical vehicle charging points. Winters Way was one of the sites that would be considered for extra parking so there would be a change of use for this site.

Councillor N Bedford stated that if any of the garage sites were pulled down and into extra parking with electrical charging points that these could potentially be used as football pitches and the charging points would get damaged so hard landscaping would need to be thought about to discourage any football games otherwise residents would complain.

R Hoyte advised that the team had been discussing ideas and suggestions had been made for bollards that could be operated by a fob system, looking at the landscaping to improve in and around the garage areas. There will be plans and drawings for any sites going down this route and it would be discussed with members before being approved.

Councillor D Wixley stated that he was being approached by residents particularly in the case of Castell Road, Loughton. A resident had been trying to make contact with the Council to ask some questions and left a message on the 25 February and was still waiting for a reply. He asked if he could send the details through to the Service Manager for her to deal with outside of the meeting. He then referred to page 86 of the agenda and advised that Hornbeam Close (site A), Loughton was in fact in Buckhurst Hill.

He echoed what was said earlier about parking stress as this would be an issue for some of these sites and in the ward he represented it should be taken into account as it was a quality of life issue if residents were fighting over parking spaces and the people who rent the garages needed to be thought about and as to where they will now be able to park.

R Hoyte advised that the housing development email address was given to raise queries and officers have been sent a number of these queries to pick up over the

last few days, so it may well be that this residents query was being dealt with, but Councillor Wixley should send her over the residents queries and she would make sure they were answered. She stated that there were lots of queries as this email was for all of the sites and they were not being ignored it was a case of working through the list in the order they were received.

She advised that a lot of the sites would be having parking surveys done which will be looked at in the day and night time and parking stress would be taken into consideration in a number of areas before any site went forward for planning.

Decision:

That the schemes within Phase 5 be approved to be appropriated, noting the schemes that have already been completed.

Reason for Decision:

To enable the sites within phase 5 to progress.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

There were no other options for action.

32. Any Other Business

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

CHAIRMAN