

HOUSING COMMITTEE

20 March 2014

7.00 pm – 8.30 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Liz Peters	P
Councillor Chris Brine (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Philip Booth	P	Councillor Frances Roden	P
Councillor Gordon Craig	P	Councillor Emma Sims	P
Councillor Paul Hemming	A	Councillor Tom Williams	P
Councillor Brian Marsh	P	Councillor Debbie Young	P

P = Present A = Absent

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Liz Ashton
Councillor Geoff Wheeler

Officers Present:

Strategic Head (Tenant Services)	Head of Asset Management
Head of Housing Contracts	Democratic Services Assistant
Head of Housing Management	

Invited Guest:

Sandra Mutton, Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum.

HC.064

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Paul Hemming.

HC.065

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Emma Sims declared an interest in item 5 of the agenda, Community Land Trusts.

HC.066

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 February 2014 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

HC.067 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None received.

HC.068 **COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS**

Having declared an interest, Councillor Emma Sims left the meeting during the discussion and decision making for this item.

The Head of Asset Management presented the report which sought approval to continue discussions with Nailsworth Community Land Trust (NCLT), giving them the opportunity to put together a proposal on a specific site. One of the key aspects of any proposal would be to provide permanently held affordable housing.

The Head of Asset Management identified that Stroud District Council (SDC) would need to consider Value for Money in any land transfer. It was reported that at the Stroud Council Housing Forum meeting on 4 March 2014, there had been a preference for any transfer of land from SDC not to be at nil cost. There had also been concerns as to whether a CLT was a good way to deliver affordable housing.

Members noted that advantages of a CLT was that community owned projects would be less likely to receive opposition to any planning proposal and a CLT would also be able to access funding not available to the District Council. By using such measures as a CLT, the District Council could be an enabler for the provision of affordable housing.

There was agreement to continue discussion with the CLT and to request an update report in October 2014.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **To continue discussions with the Community Land Trust (CLT) at Nailsworth;**
 - b) **To give NCLT 12 months to assemble a proposal for a named site, and**
 - c) **That the Head of Asset Management agree a memorandum of understanding with NCLT, investigate how other CLTs are structured/financed and report back to a future Committee.**

HC.069 **COUNCIL NEW BUILD PROGRAMME**

The Head of Housing Contracts presented the Committee with an update on the Council's New Build Programme and sought approval for changes within the programme.

The decision by the Council's Strategy and Resources Committee to appropriate the Chapel Street, Cam, site to the HRA had provided the opportunity to advance the development from 2016/17 to 2015/16 and to bring forward the budget of £850,000.

In response to a question from a Member, officers explained that the May Lane site had been problematic and the land would be held for several years before development could commence. An option would be to sell the site for social housing.

In respect of the Littlecombe Site, it was reported that there would be a mix of shared ownership and social rented homes. The increased budget for the Top of Town site took account of the increased number of units and also the income from sale of shared ownership units.

The overall impact of the report's proposals was to deliver an increased number of units and at an earlier stage.

Members noted the excellent work that was being undertaken to deliver the new build programme for the district and recorded their thanks to the officers involved.

- RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**
- a) **To bring forward the Chapel Street, Cam site from 2016/17 to 2015/16;**
 - b) **To increase the net cost of Littlecombe by £153k to £1,643k to take account of potential reductions in the sales price of shared ownership units and marketing costs;**
 - c) **Increase in Top of Town budget by £400k to take account of increased units and also income of £400k from sale of shared ownership units;**
 - d) **Removal of May Lane, Dursley from the programme.**

HC.070

THE OPTION TO JOIN THE 'RENTAL EXCHANGE'

The Committee received an update from the Head of Housing Management following the establishment of a task and finish group to look into the initiative, which would enable tenants to build a credit history, help them to obtain affordable banking and financial services and to gain sound identity records, which would assist them financially and in other ways.

The Chair of the Stroud Council Housing Forum informed the Committee that the Forum's only comment was that tenants should have the choice to opt out of the process if wished. It was confirmed that assurances had already been given that tenants could opt out of the scheme.

In welcoming the scheme, Members recognised the advantages for tenants. It was suggested that the introduction of the scheme should be set with sufficient lead in time to give any tenants with rent arrears the opportunity to clear their arrears before the scheme commenced.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **To accept the recommendation from the Task and Finish Group to undertake the first stage of the rental exchange process.**
 - b) **To ask the Task and Finish Group to analyse the data produced by stage 1 and bring a recommendation back to Housing Committee on whether to formally join the rental exchange (section 3 of the report refers).**

HC.071

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In updating the Committee on performance, the Committee's representatives, Councillors Brian Marsh and Debbie Young drew attention to the following:

- The data on 'First Fix' figures showed that 65% of repair jobs to the Council's housing stock had been completed on the first visit. The Strategic Head of Tenant Services informed Members that there had been some miscoding, hence the apparent low rate of success. The latest data for repairs in February showed that 93% were completed on the first visit.
- It was agreed that in future, Members would submit written performance reports.

RESOLVED

To note the report.

HC.072

WORK PROGRAMME

The following topics were identified as items for the Committee's future Work Programme:

- Financial year end performance figures
- Local Lettings Policy
- Examine different models to deliver increased housing stock numbers including an SPV
- Establish a Task and Finish Group to develop an 'In House Provider' for gas servicing and maintenance. Councillors Mattie Ross, Chris Brine and Tom Williams were selected.
- Longer term view of Sheltered Housing needs, what will be required in 10 years time.

RESOLVED

To note the work programme, subject to the inclusion of the above in the 2014/15 work programme.

HC.073

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

None received.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked all Members for their contribution to the work of the Committee during the past year. It was noted that Councillor Philip Booth would not be standing for election to the Council in May. Councillor Booth was thanked for his contributions to the work of the Committee and to the Council.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Chair