

**HOLLOWAY CRESCENT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10am on 5 MARCH 2010**

Present: Councillors S Barker, R H Chamberlain, J E Hudson and J A Redfern.

Officers in attendance: H Harvey (Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer), E Petrie (Housing Management Manager), R Procter (Democratic Services Officer), S Robinson (Housing Enabling and Development Officer), J Snares (Housing Options/Homelessness Manager) and S Wood (Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager).

HC1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E J Godwin.

HC2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Redfern was elected Chairman.

HC3 HOLLOWAY CRESCENT NEW BUILD BUNGALOWS

The Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager gave an update on work due to commence under Phase 1. Planning permission had been obtained and developers were preparing to start work. The units to be provided would comprise three two-bed and two one-bed bungalows. As one of the existing bungalows was now vacant, it would be used as a site office.

The Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer said issues to be resolved as soon as possible were parking and the location of recycling bins.

Councillor Barker said parking was a priority for residents, and she had already been contacted by the parish clerk on this issue.

Officers replied that the Council's Surveyor was looking into the feasibility of providing additional parking. Councillor Barker advised parking areas should be provided before the building works if possible, to give residents some kind of infrastructure in readiness for the works. The Parish Council should be kept informed of arrangements.

The Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager said funding was dependent on starting the works on site by the end of March. Consultation of residents would be taking place in the next few weeks and officers were aiming to finalise plans for proposed parking next week. Once plans were agreed, parking works were estimated to take three to four weeks.

Regarding costs, funding had been identified from estates budgets. For new build, parking provision had been made only for the four bungalows. Councillor Barker asked about the possibility of generating money from the sale of houses to put back into parking provision.

Members discussed the importance of ring-fencing capital receipts obtained through any future sale of housing land in order to ensure the money could be channelled back into housing improvements. The Chairman said it was essential that parking was part of the entire package.

Members agreed it would be important to set down a timetable for the works.

Councillor Barker asked whether dropped kerbs would be provided. Officers replied there was not sufficient frontage outside the bungalows. Members noted there had been some instances of inconsiderate parking, and parking on the Green, but that allocated parking was not a feasible option.

It was noted the developer, Hill Partnerships, had given a completion date of March/April 2011.

HC4

OPTIONS FOR SHELTERED SITE

The Housing Strategy and Planning Policy Manager outlined possible options for the sheltered housing site, as follows:

- (1) Obtain planning permission and then to sell the land to a developer,
- (2) to explore the possibility of sourcing further funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in order for the Council to undertake development with a Housing Association,
- (3) to explore the possibility of building 50% affordable housing with a Housing Association and 50% private housing.

She tabled plans which the architect had prepared as examples of what could be provided, however these were drawn up based on the original proposals and comprised mostly bungalows. She explained that she had asked the Housing Options and Homelessness Manager to speak about housing need. This would guide what was provided on the site.

Members discussed the possibilities. Councillor Chamberlain said there were other sheltered housing schemes in the district which would need refurbishing in the future, such as Mead Court and Reynolds Court. This could be an opportunity to create a pot of money for re-distribution.

The Chairman felt strongly it was important to maximise capital receipts by first obtaining planning permission, and that care should be taken to ensure monies were ring-fenced for housing use.

Councillor Barker said she would like to obtain planning permission for 13 units, including 2 affordable housing units, and then sell as a package. An updated valuation of the site would be helpful. She felt there was no benefit in going down the HCA route.

The Chairman said it was a priority to take advice on what type of accommodation would be suitable for the market, and asked that officers provide this information.

Councillor Barker asked whether there were other sites which would be suitable for 'pump priming' and then selling off in part. It was noted an asset review was currently awaited, but that there had been a previous review of garage sites. This review had identified some areas suitable for development.

Councillor Chamberlain referred to sheltered housing schemes where high void levels indicated a long-term problem with letting. He said properties might be seen as more attractive if people knew there were plans to refurbish them. There needed to be a serious debate on future sheltered housing options and money needed to be found to refurbish other sheltered housing sites.

Councillor Barker said the County Council needed extra care provision and there was potential for specialist groups.

The Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer referred to the current changes to the Council's sheltered housing service, which included transferring to the Careline telephone response service. Sheltered housing properties needed to be fit for purpose. The Housing Options and Homelessness Manager said the needs and wishes of people in their 60s and 70s did not always match up with the type of accommodation being provided for this group.

Action points agreed during discussion were:

- (1) A valuation of the Holloway Crescent site to be obtained.
- (2) A further meeting of the task group to be held as soon as possible to monitor the arrangements for parking at the site.
- (3) officers to draw up a list of other major projects in the district.
- (4) officers to advise on types of accommodation appropriate to the current market.

There was further discussion regarding current policy on developing council houses with large gardens. Officers explained that such properties were re-let with less garden space where this would lead to sufficient additional space to build another house. Officers also suggested further reviewing garage sites.

Regarding the three development options for Holloway Crescent suggested to the meeting, Members agreed:

- (1) Option 1 - sale of the land to a developer – would be considered further once a new valuation was obtained.
- (2) Option 2 - the Council to undertake development using HCA funding – was rejected, as there would be no capital receipt to enable improvements to existing housing schemes.
- (3) Option 3 – building half affordable and half private housing – would be considered further. Officers would approach a housing association with a view to using the site for 50% affordable housing and 50% capital receipt.

Members emphasised that any development of Council properties should be seen as part of a district-wide process. The Council should balance the duty to provide affordable housing with the use of money to improve other housing

schemes, and capital receipts from development should be ring-fenced within the HRA for use against the next housing priority.

HC5

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 10am on Thursday 8 April 2010.

The meeting ended at 11.15am.