



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Dawn French

Housing Board Remote Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 30th June, 2020

Time: 11.00 am

Venue: Zoom - <https://zoom.us/>

Chairman: Councillor P Lees

Members: Councillors A Armstrong, A Coote, A Dean, A Khan, M Lemon, S Merifield and N Reeve

AGENDA PART 1

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4 - 7

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Homelessness Update

To receive an update on Homelessness in the District (verbal).

4 Housing Strategy

To receive an update on the Housing Strategy (verbal).

5 HRA Business Plan

To receive an update on the HRA Business Plan (verbal).

To receive an update on development (report now available).

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

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Agenda Item 2

**HOUSING BOARD held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 21
NOVEMBER 2019 at 11.00 am**

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors A Coote, A Dean, A Gerard, M Lemon, S Merifield
and N Reeve
Officers in attendance: R Millership (Assistant Director - Housing, Health and
Communities) and J Snares (Housing Strategy and Operations
Manager)
Also Present: Mrs C Mandy (Chair of Tenant Forum)
Mrs J Cousins (Member of Tenant Forum)

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies of absence were received from Cllrs Khan and Armstrong

Declarations of interest were made by Cllrs Merifield, Lemon, Gerrard and
Reeve as members of the Planning Committee and Cllr Lemon as a private
landlord

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 March 2019 were approved and
signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting

3 **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY**

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager gave a brief explanation for the
requirements for a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and then
explained that after this meeting the draft document would go out to public
consultation any amendments would then be made before the document went
before Cabinet for formal adoption in January 2020.

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager suggested that members may
like to email her with any comments or queries that they have regarding the
document.

Cllr Dean asked some questions regarding the strategy and for clarification
regarding some of the figures and charts within it. Cllr Reeve asked if the officer
was confident that the strategy could be delivered, she said that there were
always unknowns but yes as things stood she was.

Members felt that this was a good document and were happy for it to be
consulted on and then put to cabinet with any amendments.

4 **RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE SETTING**

The Assistant Director Housing Health and Communities talked to the contents of the report that explained the approach being taken to increasing rents for the council's housing and garage tenants in the coming financial year.

Cllr Reeve asked why CPI was used for rents but RPI for other charges. The Assistant Director explained that the Government used CPI for its rents policy but that the council had historically always used RPI for its other charges so this is why service charges were increased by RPI.

It was explained that Lifeline charges are to be kept at the same level again this year as Essex County Council are currently reviewing telecare services across Essex and are looking at procuring an Essex wide service rather than funding individual councils such as Uttlesford to provide the service to their referees.

Cllr Gerrard asked was the Governments rent policy likely to change with a change in Government. Officers felt it would be very unlikely to change for the next year at least.

APPROVED to endorse the contents of the report and rents and service charges to be increased accordingly

5 **TENANT REGULATORY PANEL (TRP) UPDATE**

In the absence of the Chair of the Regulatory Panel the Housing Strategy and Operations Manager briefed members on the contents of the report in front of them that the panel had completed on sheltered housing. She also explained that the panel would now be looking at the council's downsizing policy that tried to encourage tenants in larger properties to move to smaller ones.

It was also explained by officers that once the current STARR survey of all our tenants was completed there would be a review of how the council engaged with its tenants and the roles of the Tenants Forum and Regulatory Panel.

6 **DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Housing Strategy and Operations Manager gave a verbal update on the council's current development programme

Hatherley Court – Phase 2 was progressing well after delays caused by having to move pipes and cables and is now expected to be completed in February 2020.

Frambury Lane and Newton Grove – the four properties on each of these sites were now nearing completion with Frambury Lane due to be ready for letting in December and Newton Grove just into the New Year. It was suggested that members might like to view these properties before they were occupied.

Walden Place – The plans for a pre planning application for this scheme are being finalised. The plan is to detach the main house from the rest of the sheltered scheme and then sell the listed house for private development, whilst new communal facilities and replacement flats would be added to the remaining part of the scheme.

The Moors – We are now in contract for building 16 new council properties on this site, half of which will be at social rent thanks to the HOMES England grant funding we have received. Planning conditions are being discharged and it is hoped building works will commence properly in January with the scheme completing in early 2020.

Great Chesterford site – we are currently waiting a planning committee date for the revised scheme for this site. Although the site has planning permission, which was gained by Hastoe Housing Association before the council bought this site, the current permission is for 11 larger market style properties and we are seeking to change this to 13 properties appropriate for letting at affordable rents. We have started to discharge some of the planning conditions associated with the original application as they will be the same under any new permission granted. If we do not get a new planning permission then we would have to build out the current permission.

Thaxted Road Saffron Walden – planning permission has now been granted on this site and detailed plans are now being drawn up prior to going out to tender for a contractor.

We are also at the various stages of the development process for sites in Saffron Walden, White Roding and Elsenham.

Cllr Dean asked a question regarding the standard of housing being developed by the council in terms of energy efficiency. Officers explained that we had a build standard that was set by members in the past and that was set to meet building regulation standards. We didn't currently develop Passiv houses because of the additional costs involved which would result in us delivering fewer houses. The Asst Director said that if members wanted officers to look again at these standards then officers could look at comparative costs of both building costs and what this would mean in terms of savings to tenants on their heating costs.

Cllr Reeve asked a question regarding the thermal efficiency of current council stock. The Asst Director explained that we had a programme for external insulation on our single brick homes that was currently about half way complete. There were still over 200 properties to go and the budget was currently set to complete 10 properties a year due to the expensive nature of this type of work. She confirmed that currently there were no government grants available.

The Assistant Director: Housing Health and Communities then presented a report regarding the future of two of the council's sheltered schemes. Alexia Houser in Dunmow and Parkside in Saffron Walden. It was explained that both these schemes no longer provided accommodation of the standard that would meet 21st Century living and therefore it was proposed to look at full re-

development on both these sites. Parkside would continue to be older person's accommodation but not a sheltered scheme and the Alexia House site would be considered for general needs housing.

Officers were looking at this stage for an in principle agreement from members so that officers could start talking to tenants about the future of these sites and to stop the allocation of any future vacancies.

Members were keen to see this work progressed especially that a scheme in Dunmow was being considered as there was a perception that everything happened in the north of the district.

APPROVED Officers to move to the next stage of undertaking feasibility studies on these two sites, informing tenants of the council's plans and not re-letting future vacancies within these two schemes.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED to exclude the public and press for the following items on the grounds that they contained exempt information within the meaning of s.1 etc

8 **HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE PROPOSALS**

The Assistant Director: Housing Health and Communities presented details of a proposal to set up a joint venture with Norse (a company originally set up by Norfolk County Council that still has links to the council). This would see the creation of a new company, Uttlesford Norse, which would deliver the repairs and maintenance services that are currently provided by the council's team at Newport depot along with its outside contractors.

Members then discussed the proposal which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 26 November.

It was explained that all employees in the services affected would transfer to the joint venture company with Norse with no change to their existing terms and conditions of employment. A consultation process in relation to the transfer of employees would commence should the arrangement be approved by Cabinet.

APPROVED that members of the housing board were fully supportive of the proposal for a joint venture with Norse to deliver the repairs and maintenance services.

Meeting closed at 12.50.

Committee: Housing Board
Date: 30th June 2016
Title: Development Sites
Report Author: Doug Malins, Judith Snares

Summary

1. This report provides the Housing Board with detail relating to the proposed development of various sites across the District.
2. These sites have been identified as having potential for the development of council owned homes, as part of the council's on-going development programme.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Board:

Recommends to Cabinet that these identified sites are progressed through the planning application stage, and subject to borrowing capacity within the Housing Revenue Account, put into construction.

Financial Implications

4. Financial provision for the development of new Council owned homes is included within the Housing Revenue Account. The development of these sites will be through the use of Right to Buy capital receipts, S106 funds and borrowing within the HRA.
5. The indicative costs for the developments have been estimated by our consultant Quantity Surveyor. These costs are currently estimates which will be updated as further detailed information becomes available. They do, however, take account of known site constraints and prevailing market conditions. The final cost will only be known following the tender process for the selection of a building contractor.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

[Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021](#)
[HRA Business Plan 2016 – 2046](#)

7.

Communication/Consultation	Existing tenants, local residents, Parish and Town Councils and external agencies
Community Safety	Appropriate precautions would be taken during works
Equalities	Equality and diversity is a key issue for the Council with regards to housing provision
Health and Safety	During the management of the project all risks will be constantly reviewed, revised and managed
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Legal team have been consulted
Sustainability	An opportunity to construct new thermally efficient homes for people in housing need.
Ward-specific impacts	Various
Workforce/Workplace	There are sufficient resources in the housing team to manage the development projects identified in this report

Situation

8. Officers have been working on developing a new 3 year development programme with an objective of achieving 200 properties over this period.
9. Opportunities have been identified to source and deliver new housing as follows:
 - Using existing council owned sites within the district – where we own land such as garage sites that have potential to be developed
 - The acquisition of land if economically viable
 - The acquisition of Rural Exceptions Sites if economically viable
 - The acquisition of s106 opportunities with developers and housebuilders in partnership with our registered provider partners
 - The acquisition of existing dwellings that would provide a value for money option and meet an identified need.

HRA Business Plan

10. The Council's HRA Business Plan is a key document in relation to the development and redevelopment of the housing stock. It considers the financial viability of investment in new homes and the numbers to be developed as well as their locations in the short to medium term. The plan is currently being updated to include new borrowing opportunities.
11. To ensure that the Council can continue to fund the development of Council housing it is important that each scheme identified has been properly assessed for viability. There must be an acceptable relationship between the cost of delivering the housing, taking all costs into account, and the rental income that will be received. It is necessary to ensure that the impact of each scheme on the HRA Business Plan is calculated and properly understood. The cumulative effect of the development programme must be affordable in the context of the wider HRA Business Plan.
12. Development provides good value for money if it takes place on Council owned land. As such it is important to explore the potential of the Council's land holdings to contribute towards improving the supply of new Council housing.
13. As well as sites that have already been progressed as detailed in the development programme, the sites below have been identified as development opportunities on council owned land:

Parkside, Saffron Walden

14. This site is currently a Sheltered Housing Scheme, which was identified in the Sheltered Housing Review as providing accommodation that does not conform to modern standards. It has therefore been identified for redevelopment. The existing tenants have been consulted, and suitable alternative accommodation will be identified for them all. Having looked at refurbishment or demolition and re-build, it has been concluded that the latter is the better option. Therefore the proposal is to demolish the existing building to provide a new self-contained independent living development of self contained apartments, for residents aged 60 years old and over. Architects have been appointed and are consulting with Planners through a Pre-Planning Application. The current proposal is to construct 21 new apartments on the site, with a mixture of 1 and 2 bedrooms, and also including 2 wheelchair standard flats. The current budget estimate is £3.5 million, and this will be continually reviewed as our proposal for the site is developed further.

Gold Close, Elsenham

15. This site is a small parking area at the above location. It is under-utilised as a parking area because the properties in that locality have their own in curtilage parking provision and some also have garages. Residents were notified regarding the closure of the parking area and it has been closed off since

February 2020. The proposal for the site is to construct a 3 bedroom fully wheelchair compliant bungalow for an identified family in housing need. The bungalow has been designed in partnership with the family and their Occupational Therapist to ensure that it meets their requirements now and into the future. On this basis, a Planning Application has been submitted. The construction estimate for the property is £220,000.

Auton Croft, Saffron Walden

16. This site is an area of open space in the ownership of UDC. It is accessed via the affordable housing development at Auton Croft. Architects have been appointed and planning colleagues have been consulted via a Pre-Planning Application. Planners are supportive of the development of this site, and plans have been developed to construct 14 new dwellings. The homes will consist of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses, and a 2 bedroom wheelchair compliant bungalow. The homes will be heated by Air Source Heat pumps and PV panels will be provided on the roofs where appropriate. The current estimated build cost is £2.1 million.

White Roding

17. This Council owned site is an area of disused open space on an existing Council House development. Architects have yet to be appointed to progress this site, but we estimate that it has capacity to deliver up to 12 new rented Council homes. At this stage, we have not undertaken a cost estimate, but subject to site constraints and any abnormal costs, we are budgeting the build cost to be in the region of £2 million. When progressing the site, the necessary surveys will be undertaken, and we will consult with planning colleagues and all local stakeholders.

Alexia House, Great Dunmow

18. As with Parkside above, this is a Council owned sheltered housing complex that was identified in the Sheltered Housing Review as not conforming to modern standards. The proposal is to demolish the existing building to provide new self-contained apartments for older people.. The existing tenants have been consulted, and suitable alternative accommodation will be identified for them all. We have yet to instruct an architect for this site, but anticipate, subject to constraints, that it could provide 16 new homes. A budget of £2.5 million has been proposed for this scheme.

Takeley

19. The Day Centre in Takeley, owned by the council's General Fund, is now closed as the building is no longer fit for purpose. The proposal under investigation is to develop the site occupied by the day centre, along with an adjacent area of land currently occupied by garages that are in need of demolition due to their poor condition. It is thought that up to 8 council rented homes could be delivered on this site. There is another parking area with garages in the vicinity of this site, so there is also the possibility to extend this row of garages, to replace some of those being demolished. This would have the added benefit of resolving an area that is subject to fly tipping of abandoned cars etc.

Unidentified Sites

20. The Council must consider acquiring land on the open market or by negotiation where practical in order to ensure that homes can be provided where they are needed as our existing land holdings are limited.

21. Housing Officers are currently working with their strategic planning colleagues to identify land already earmarked for potential housing development or stalled sites, that could provide further development opportunities for the HRA. The intention is to identify 2/3 sites that would bring the number of new council rented homes identified for development by the HRA over the next 3 years, to approximately 200 properties. Further detail of these sites will be brought before members as they are identified.

Development Programme:

22.

Location	Number of Properties
Great Chesterford	12
The Moors, Little Dunmow	16
Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden	14
Walden Place, Saffron Walden	3 (New)
Parkside, Saffron Walden	21
Alexia House, Great Dunmow	16
Gold Close, Elsenham	1
White Roding	12
Auton Croft, Saffron Walden	14
South Road, Takeley	8
S106 site – currently negotiating with a developer	14
Unidentified sites	71
Total	200

Risk Analysis

23.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Insufficient sites identified for development	2	2	Look at all options available to ensure delivery target is met

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.