

# **NOTE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2018**

## **Present:**

Chairman: Councillor Dean

Councillors Barker, Felton and Redfern

Stephanie Baxter, Ben Ferguson, Sassi Mannion, Simon Payne, Judith Snares.

## **1. Updates since Scrutiny Committee – Affordable Housing in the proposed Garden Communities**

The Chairman said the purpose of the group was to clarify the issue of affordable housing in the proposed garden communities. He said there was uncertainty over what was meant by 'affordable' and the Council needed to identify its key objectives in terms of an affordable housing policy.

Simon Payne said this was an opportunity for Members to express their priorities in terms of what was needed, and wanted in the District, and to influence the outcome of development through the planning/development process.

Councillor Redfern said there was confusion over the definition of 'affordable' and Members required advice from officers to ensure the full range of housing options were known to them.

The Chairman said it was fundamental that the Council knew what was needed in the District. He said once the need had been identified, then the Council could make plans towards managing housing need.

Members discussed a variety of issues and principles relating to affordable housing:

- The definition of 'Affordable Housing' – affordable for whom?
- The demographics of those who will live in the Garden Communities – commuter towns or homes for local workers?
- The generational issues that are linked to affordability and housing need – under 35's disadvantaged in terms of saving for a deposit and getting on the 'housing ladder'.

- The socio-economic issues linked to affordability and housing need in the District – will low earners working in Uttlesford be able to afford to live in the District?
- Right to Buy – exhausting social housing stock whilst not being able to fully utilise receipts due to central government rules, and being extended by government to Housing Association stock. How could the Council protect affordable housing schemes?

## **2. Verbal Briefing on Strategy and Plan making for the Garden Communities**

Stephanie Baxter outlined the importance of 'land value capture', which could release resources to provide affordable homes at reduced cost.

Of particular interest to Members was the idea of using community land trust models for some of the affordable housing to ensure it remained affordable and available for local people in perpetuity. Stephanie Baxter said this would also give more flexibility and options in terms of the range of affordable housing that could be offered, such as Rent to Own, or shared ownership schemes.

Members agreed that prioritising local housing need should be a key objective in the Council's affordable housing policy.

## **3. Proposed Framework for Report to Scrutiny Committee**

Simon Payne said the group would need to meet again before a report could be produced for the Scrutiny Committee. Members concurred and requested further information and evidence on the following:

- To define local housing need in Uttlesford – generation and demographic issues to be outlined.
- Forward projections – what will be needed in the future?
- Employment – how many jobs will be generated by the garden communities?
- Can a balance between commuters and local workers be achieved?
- Public spaces – how will they be shaped? Retail or social spaces?
- What is 'affordable' housing? Affordability fixed to income?
- Land Value Capture and affordable housing trusts.

Members agreed to hold the next meeting in approximately three weeks' time.