



Cabinet
Wednesday, 8th February, 2023 at 3.30 pm
in the Assembly Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market
Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary Documents

1. **MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES** (Pages 2 - 7)
 - a. Recommendations from Environment and Community Panel – Local Authority Housing Fund.
 - b. Recommendations from Regeneration and Development Panel – Hunstanton Multi User Hub.

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 8 FEBRUARY 2023 FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING ON 2 FEBRUARY 2023

EC59: LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

Officers presented the report which provided information on the grant funding offered to the Borough Council in December 2022 through the Local Authority Housing Fund programme which had been established by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support Local Authorities to acquire homes to accommodate households with housing needs who have arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes.

The Chair thanked the officer for their report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor de Whalley welcomed the scheme and commented that he had investigated community sponsorship schemes which identified vulnerable people for resettlement and matched them with sponsors. He commented that those entering the scheme needed protecting and he referred to existing charities that could also provide support. He commented that the houses should not go into the wider stock and instead the Council should set up, or support an existing charity to act as a community sponsor so that the support was ongoing and could deal with any future emergencies.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the grant funding offered by Government for this scheme was for Capital purposes and revenue would be required for ongoing support elements. She highlighted the criteria of the funding in that it could only be used for those who had already arrived through schemes as set out in the report. The scheme granted flexibility so that the provision could be used in the wider housing stock if required.

Councillor de Whalley commented that he would like plans for the future to be looked at so that the Council was prepared to ensure that refugees had safety and security.

Councillor Hudson referred to the match funding element of the scheme and that any overspend would be the Councils responsibility. She felt that the grant funding awarded would not cover the costs of acquiring the properties. She referred to the existing housing stock available via Housing Associations and that some were in desperate need of refurbishment and felt that this funding should be used to make improvements to the existing housing stock.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the grant funding could not be used for refurbishment and explained that West Norfolk Housing Company would take on the delivery of the units through this scheme and the budget for this had been accounted for in the Company's Business Plan. Modelling would be carried out to identify the mix of housing to be delivered through the scheme and it was likely that houses that were already under construction would be used for the scheme so that the tight timescales could be achieved.

Councillor Hudson commented that there were so many people on the housing register that could be frustrated by this scheme and felt that funding should be directed towards this instead.

Councillor Moriarty asked for clarification on the recommendation within the report relating to delegated authority for the final terms on the Memorandum of Understanding. The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the delegation would involve accepting the principles set

out by Government in terms of accepting the funding allocation, the number of homes to be delivered and timescales. It would not involve increasing the match funding.

In response to a further question from Councillor Moriarty, the Assistant Director explained that the prospectus set out the terms of the scheme and then further detail would be required to establish the Council's Policy for delivery of the scheme including details of tenures, eligibility and assessment of need.

In response to a question from Councillor Moriarty regarding the tight timescales involved, the Housing Strategy Manager explained that the purchase of homes already under development would be investigated. There was some flexibility afforded if the homes were not completed within the timeframe as long as the necessary contracts were in place.

Councillor Moriarty asked for details of tenures and how long people would be permitted to stay in the homes so that stock would be available for those who needed them. The Assistant Director explained that tenancies would be included in the Policy document.

In response to a question from Councillor Moriarty, it was clarified that the Government had made an allocation of fourteen homes for those who had arrived from Ukraine and two homes for Afghan refugees. And this was based on a Government formula. The requirement was for sixteen properties to be delivered and it was confirmed that these could be a mix of sizes to respond to the need of eligible people.

Councillor Ware commented that the fund would be better used to refurbish existing Housing Association properties. She also asked how rents would be paid and it was explained that affordable rents would be paid and it may be that some of the tenants would be eligible for certain benefits to assist with payments. The Assistant Director explained that West Norfolk Housing Company were a social housing provider and they would be taking the scheme forward.

Councillor Bubb asked if the properties would be pepper potted, if locations near to facilities and towns would be considered and if the properties would be furnished. The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the availability of stock would be investigated, but it was likely that homes would be made available close to towns. It was also confirmed that this scheme did not include furnishings, but there were other schemes available that people could be signposted to if required.

Councillor Bullen commented that consideration needed to be given to the location of the properties in relation to families who were already here and had support networks in place.

Councillor Ryves addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He felt that there would be resentment from local people who had been waiting on the housing register for a long time. He commented that there was also lots of sub-standard social housing and that the Council should work with Freebridge Community Housing and commit to refurbishment. The Assistant Director explained that this was something that could be investigated separate from this scheme and he was aware that Freebridge Community Housing were currently assessing their stock and looking at options.

Councillor Moriarty commented that he agreed with the suggestion put forward by Councillor Ryves, that the Council work with Freebridge Community Housing to look at ways that improvements could be made to the social housing stock in the Borough.

The Chief Executive explained that there could be further opportunities through Government funding schemes to address other needs such as refurbishment in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below and asked Cabinet to note the comments made about looking at opportunities to work with Freebridge Community Housing in the future.

It is recommended that:-

1. The Council will enter a Memorandum of Understanding with DLUHC based on the attached prospectus for the Local Authority Housing Fund (see appendix 2). Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing People and Communities to agree the final terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with DLUHC.
2. The Council will accept the total sum of £1,719,141 offered to the Council by DLUHC under the Local Authority Housing Fund to deliver the programme understanding the match funding requirements as set out in the report and attached prospectus.
3. Cabinet agrees that, subject to agreement from West Norfolk Housing Company, the properties will be acquired by West Norfolk Housing Company, funded by the grant, debt financing and other available funding
4. The Council requests that West Norfolk Housing Company works with the Council to deliver the properties through the fund.
5. Cabinet agrees to the principle of allocating properties acquired through the fund to eligible Ukrainian and Afghan households. A further report setting out a policy approach will follow separately.
6. Authority is delegated to the Assistant Director Programme & Project Delivery to
 - a. alter the proposed NORA 4 tenure mix, originally agreed by Cabinet on the 4th February 2020 (CAB 106), where necessary, to facilitate the disposal of properties previously identified as Private Rent and/or Open Market Sale, to West Norfolk Housing Company (WNHC) as affordable housing
 - b. negotiate the terms of any disposal with West Norfolk Housing Company.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 8 FEBRUARY 2023 FROM THE REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2023

RD88: HUNSTANTON MULTI USER HUB AND TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

The Assistant Director presented the Cabinet report which provided the background to the project and the issues that were now being faced. A copy of the presentation is attached. It was explained that issues with Planning Permission Regulatory changes, unforeseen rises in construction costs following the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently forecast falling house prices, have had a material impact on the financial viability of this scheme.

Alternative options for the site were being considered, but the conclusion was that the site had become unviable for a variety of reasons as a location for housing, the availability of other government grants for transport and NCC prepared to fund their own library and to invest in the site as an Active Travel Hub, officers are instead recommending that the Council pursues this option.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for his report and invited question and comments from Members of the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Beal, the Assistant Director explained that recommendation two included details of the TIC provision.

Councillor Beal referred to the bus stops outside the Princess Theatre and Spinney and felt that these were no longer needed and should be reverted back to much needed car parking spaces. The Assistant Director explained that this would be a matter for the Highways Authority.

In response to a question from Councillor Beal regarding the Camper Van trial, the Assistant Director explained that no sites had been identified presently.

Councillor Beal referred to the Hunstanton Oasis and commented that it needed to be retained on the Seafront and not moved to a car park. He also suggested use of the school site. The Assistant Director explained that consultations and discussions had taken place with Hunstanton Town Council and Hunstanton Advisory Group on the school site, but it would involve a loss of playing fields. The Assistant Director explained that the next steps for the Oasis were being looked at and feedback on the unsuccessful Levelling Up Fund application was awaited.

Councillor Beal raised concerns on the charges and subsidies of the Oasis.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Gidney made reference to access to the development and storage for cycles. He also asked if it was possible to see an interior ground floor plan of the development to see if there was potential for expansion in the future. Councillor Gidney also commented that solar panels should be used alongside things that were beneficial for wildlife, such as bird boxes. The Assistant Director explained that he could feedback Councillor Gidneys comments to the Norfolk County Council proposal. The Assistant Director confirmed that the development would be fully DDA compliant and would provide cycle parking and storage provisions.

Councillor de Whalley asked for clarification on the management of the TIC and if this area would also serve as a waiting room and for detail on how this development would link in with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The Assistant Director explained that the

TIC would not be manned, but would be an information point and could also be used as a waiting area. It was noted that there was also dedicated waiting areas and shelters included as part of the development. The Panel was informed that Norfolk County Council would ensure that the plans linked up with the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Active Travel Hub proposed for King's Lynn.

Councillor Bone commented that he was disappointed that the whole scheme was not going forward, but acknowledged the issues that had prohibited this.

The Portfolio Holder for Development, Councillor Blunt agreed that it was disappointing, but unforeseen circumstances had resulted in the original development being unviable. Lots of discussions had been held on how to take the project forward and he felt that this scheme was a positive for the area.

Councillor Morley referred to the recommendations within the report and felt that these needed simplifying and detailed design work was needed.

The Chair, Councillor Collingham asked about the implications of changes to the development in terms of the ACP and the Portfolio Holder explained that the Council was working with ACP to look at other sites to transfer the funding to.

In response to a question from the Chair it was explained that the cost of safety measures were high because of the mixed use of the site. The Assistant Director provided detail of the mixed use suppression systems for residential and commercial development.

Councillor Morley proposed revised recommendations as set out below:

1. This Council recognises the existing plans for Hunstanton bus Station and Library have been frustrated due to changes in Regulations and now cannot be achieved.
2. In consultation with Norfolk County Council this Council will forward a revised plan, excluding residential development, but caters for; bus station, library hub, TIC, facilities for cycles and welfare facilities.
3. The outline design will be agreed with Norfolk County Council and Hunstanton Advisory Group to proceed to secure sufficient grants including bus back better and ACP funding.

The Chair commented that recommendations contained within the original report, including the recommendation on removing the project from the Capital Programme and the delegated authorities within the report, were pertinent to moving the project forward.

The Panel supported the original recommendations as set out within the report and that these be recommended to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration and Development Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

That Cabinet approve the following:

1. The Council will not proceed with housing on the bus station site in view of external factors affecting the viability of the scheme and the opportunity to pursue a viable alternative, and will remove the project from the Capital Programme.
2. NCC will continue to proceed with the improved library / adult education facility (including the library, toilets, and changing places toilet) on the site enabled with the addition of land owned by the Borough which will include the provision of an area for West Norfolk tourism information (subject to further negotiation);

3. NCC will proceed with the Bus Back Better Grant to improve coastal travel, cycle facilities and sustainability, invest to improve the bus station as a transport interchange and to agree terms with Borough Council for the land;
4. The Borough Council, supported by Norfolk County Council, to negotiate with Homes England in respect of the ACP funding originally allocated to development of this site.
5. The Borough Council will work with all parties on developing a joint strategic approach to regeneration and growth in the wider Hunstanton area through an agreed Masterplan;
6. That the Assistant Director for Property and Projects, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Property and Finance, S151 officer and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to finalise the legal arrangements for the land.