

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2012

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on the major housing related projects for the Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members;

2.1 **Note the progress update and that a further report will be made on the Garage Sites Project to this Committee setting out further details.**

2.2 **Note the progress regarding the implementation of the Housing Responsive Repairs Contract and that the Task Group will be monitoring progress and will report back to this Committee in due course.**

2.3 **Note the update on the Fairmead Regeneration Project.**

2.4 **Delegate authority to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Central Services and Solicitor to the Council following successful negotiations' with the affected home owners that the Regeneration and Development reserve be used to fund the cost of acquisitions and be added to the Capital Programme subject to the approval of the Policy, Finance & Admin Committee.**

2.5 **Note the update on the Housing Foyer Project.**

2.6 **Note the update on the Affordable Warmth Project.**

3.0 MAJOR HOUSING PROJECTS

3.1 Garage Sites Project

Members will be pleased to note that Outline Planning permission has been given to all 3 sites approved by this committee to enable them to be progressed as housing development.

The sites and the potential housing development is identified below:

- Saxelby Road, Asfordby Rd- Accommodation up to 3 2 bedroom houses
- Tudor Hill- Accommodation up to 3No houses
- Greaves Avenue- Accommodation up to 4 3 bedroom houses

This provides potentially 10 new affordable homes. Officers have written to the Homes

& Communities Agency (HCA) advising that we are in a position to take advantage of any under-spend or future allocation so that we can progress these sites.

A future report to this committee will provide members with a further update and a clear methodology of how the council can potentially develop and deliver this much needed housing.

3.2 Responsive Repairs

Following this Committee's decision on the 27 June 2012 to award the responsive repairs Contract to G Purchase with a contract start date of 1 October 2012. Officers have met with G Purchase a number of times as part of the mobilisation process. The key areas under consideration have been:

- Operational process/entail repair reporting
- IT
- HR/TUPE related matters
- Pricing and schedule of rates process
- Finance/Invoice payment mechanisms

The primarily focus of these meetings has been to ensure we have a seamless transition from the current responsive repairs contract and that we provide a repairs service from 12:01am 1 October 2012 following which we can then develop some of the innovative and partnering possibilities next year once the contract has bedded in.

The Housing Responsive Repairs service is a complex service that has direct impact on the welfare of our tenants. To minimise the risk of a deterioration of service whilst moving from one contractor to another or a significant reduction in performance, members were keen to see a good embedding of the contract and agreed to keep the Housing repairs Contract task group established for a further 6 months for this purpose. The first meeting of this task group has been agreed for 13 September 2012.

3.3 Fairmead Regeneration Project

The core Fairmead Regeneration Project Master plan was approved in March 2012; this also included the 1st phase business plan, which has the potential to deliver a net increase of 43 homes.

This has links to other housing estates which require significant improvements but have decanting issues due to the limited supply of suitable housing for tenants to move to. Structural surveys have been commissioned on blocks of flats that were picked up from the Housing Asset Model as having significant negative net Present value, these will link into a future report to this committee on how we may be able to progress the 1st phase of the masterplan.

Members also approved officers to negotiate with affected home owners, in order to ensure that we are in a position to proceed with development. Valuations have been undertaken and discussions are on-going with the home owners and in this respect a delegated authority is sought as set out at 2.4.

The HCA have been provided with Masterplan document and officers will continue to liaise with them in an attempt to secure funding for the project, initially for phase 1.

3.4 Housing Foyer Project

The task group met on 27 June 2012 and progressed the scheme in line with the actions identified in the Committee report. The main areas being progressed are:

- Confirming the demand for scheme
- Revenue funding/business plan viability– this relates to the financial commitment from various partner organisations, for example the County Council’s Supporting People budget and the development partner/Registered Provider. The scheme is not unviable at the offset, but it is about establishing solid funding streams initially.
- No identification of a partner– initial investigations for a suitable development partner/Registered Provider, highlighted capacity issues for some Registered Providers, following the results of the HCA’s Affordable Homes 2011-2015 funding round. As a result it was decided that the project should be available to a wider group of providers, and certain criteria on the preferred partner list was perhaps unnecessary, such as the requirement to have housing stock within the borough and upon speaking to Registered Providers beyond the County limits and those who didn’t have stock in the borough, there was sufficient interest in the scheme to proceed with exploring this avenue.
- Planning permission

This project is also being progressed through the HCA and the County Council and a further update will be forthcoming as more information becomes available.

3.5 Affordable Warmth Project

To help with ever increasing oil, gas and electricity prices, a government award-winning advice service is being rolled out across the Borough to help residents save money on their energy bills. As part of this service every resident could benefit from a free home energy audit, where all aspects of energy use around the home are analysed and simple advice is provided that could potentially save you hundreds of pounds a year.

Advice can include aspects such as heating and hot water systems and set-up, insulation, or helping you understand your energy bills and finding the cheapest tariffs.

All information is impartial, and where possible grants will be used to help finance improvements to the heating and insulation in your home, making bigger household changes in some cases completely free!

This has been very successful and in all cases the advice has resulted in some savings for the resident:

- 34 referrals to date, of which 23 have been completed (others are difficult to get hold of / wrong numbers so will be sent a letter this week).
- Average realised saving of £173 per household from **switching tariffs alone**.
- Largest single saving from tariff switching is £387.
- 2 households have been referred for cavity wall insulation (saves £135 per year), 1 household referred for loft insulation (up to £175 saved per year), and 1 household has been referred to governments Warm Front grant scheme for installation of complete new heating system.
- Every household has benefitted from adjustments to heating and hot water system set-up, the benefits of which will not be known for some time (several bills).
- Householders have benefitted from electricity monitor demonstration and 4 have kept them for long term loan where usage was unusually high.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report is an update on major projects and there are no specific policy implications.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct implications related to the recommendations in this report. Any resource implications will be presented to members in separate reports for the appropriate project.

As noted above there are a number of projects being developed all of which require funding from a very limited source so members need to be aware of this when making funding decisions. As the projects develop officers will present a report which will allow members to make considered decisions and prioritisations.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 The legal issues and implications for each project have been addressed as the project progresses.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no particular matters in this report relating to community safety.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 Equalities issues are dealt with as part of each individual project plan for the major projects.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 Each project has its own risk log developed at key stages within that project.

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no new or significant matters since the last meeting relating to climate change.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 Consultation is dealt with in the context of each individual project.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer H Rai- Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods

Date: 02 September 2012

Appendices : None

Background Papers: None

Reference : X :C'tees, Council & Sub-C'tees/CSA/2012-13/19-9-12/Major Projects Update