

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 13 January 2022 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, D Clark, W Daden, S Dobson, J Galley, N Gulliver, G B R Knight,

G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, A Sosin, N Walsh and T N Willis

Also present: Councillors M J Mackrory and J A Potter

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor R T Whitehead, who had appointed Councillor S Dobson as his substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 4 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

5. Housing Additionality: Affordable Housing for Rent Planning Advice Note

The Policy Board considered the draft Housing Additionality: Affordable Housing for Rent Planning Advice Note which proposed two ways in which the Council could seek to increase the proportion of larger four-bedroom affordable homes for rent available on new development sites.

The Advice Note had been prepared in response to the change, over the last five years, in the supply of four-bedroom affordable homes for rent, which was currently forecast to remain well below the required level. The low level of larger affordable family homes had significantly impacted on the churn of larger family homes within the existing affordable housing stock, which already had the highest need relative to supply recorded in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), leading to a decline in the number of existing affordable homes being relet overall.

The impact of this reduction in supply, particularly the disparity between larger and smaller homes, was reflected in waiting times for those accepted as homeless, which contributed to the number and cost of households in temporary accommodation.

The draft Advice Note submitted to the meeting provided guidance on two scenarios whereby the Council would consider a variation from the dwelling mix that was set out in the SHMA within the 22% affordable housing for rent component on developments of 11 dwellings or more:

- Scenario A set out a different proportion of affordable housing for rent required on sites allocated for housing in the Local Plan when the quantum of residential accommodation sought was above the level identified in the Local Plan.
- Scenario B stated that the Council would consider a different level of affordable housing for rent contribution on all planning gain sites, when it could be demonstrated that a higher number of persons could be accommodated through a larger proportion of four-bedroom homes for rent being secured than the dwelling mix set out in the SHMA.

Scenario A provided a revised mix of affordable housing for rent required, and only applied when the quantum of residential housing at development management stage was above the level identified in the Local Plan. Table 3 of the Note set out the revised dwelling mix that would be required to meet housing need on the 22% affordable housing for rent element of the additional residential accommodation.

Scenario B could apply to any residential development comprising 11 or more units.

Both scenario A and B were designed to increase the proportion of four-bedroom homes for rent available on new development sites to address the shortfall in delivery of this size of affordable home in the last five years; reduce the numbers of larger families with children being accommodated in temporary accommodation; and create a higher churn across all sizes of affordable accommodation in the existing affordable housing stock.

In response to questions asked at the meeting, officers informed the Board that:

- The Advice Note was intended to meet the greatest housing need in the whole of the city area and sought to address the shortfall of larger affordable housing units on strategic sites. There would be no nuance or variation to its approach in terms of meeting local housing need, except on exception sites. Scenario B potentially offered a degree of flexibility if identified need in a local area was linked to a Neighbourhood Plan. This, however, would need to be negotiated with the developer of a particular site taking into account the affordability of the location and with reference to the wider needs of the city.
- The Advice Note did not carry the same weight as a Supplementary Planning Document and therefore could not be considered as a material consideration when planning applications were being determined. However, members and officers could have regard to it when making decisions and it supported the aims of the Housing Strategy.
- It was not anticipated that the Advice Note would weaken the Council's position when negotiating with developers on the provision of affordable housing. The number and mix of affordable housing on strategic sites had already been viability tested and the Advice Note protected that and would only be reduced if there was an increase in the types of affordable homes that the City needed.

RESOLVED that the Planning Advice Note on Housing Additionality: Affordable Housing for Rent be supported and that

1. the Director for Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy Board and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, be authorised to make any final changes to the Advice Note ahead of its consideration by Cabinet.
2. the Housing Additionality: Affordable Housing for Rent Planning Advice Note be referred to the Cabinet for approval.

(7.04pm to 7.32pm)

6. Chelmsford Policy Board Work Programme

The Board received the latest version of its Work Programme for 2021-22.

RESOLVED that the latest Work Programme of the Board be noted.

(7.32pm to 7.33pm)

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm

Chair