

# Minutes of Strategic Housing Working Group

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 12 July 2023, starting at 1.00 pm  
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chair)

Councillors:

J Atherton  
S Atkinson

R Ray

In attendance: Director of Economic Development and Planning and Strategic Housing Officer

## 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Head of Strategic Planning and Housing. Councillor Mary Robinson was not in attendance.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

## 3 LONGRIDGE COMMUTED SUM MONIES UPDATE

Discussion took place as to the options available for the commitment of the commuted sum monies received from the land north of Dilworth Lane, Longridge.

Members were advised that the commuted sum has been paid in instalments. The first payment was made in March 2020 but there are time limits on spending the monies. The Council must spend the monies within five years of receipt.

The first option is for Ribble Valley Borough Council to partner with a registered provider (RP) and this was the option preferred by Health and Housing Committee. The Housing Strategy Officer advised that the Council had approached three RP's (Onward Homes, MSV Housing and Jigsaw Homes Group) who already have stock in Longridge. All three providers have put forward proposals. After consideration, officers believe the best option to be the proposal advanced by Onward Homes at the Alston Grange site. This is in terms of the numbers they would deliver and the type of house mix, which would include 2 bed bungalows and 3/4 bedroom properties.

Along with the commuted sum, Onward Homes would use their own monies and funds from grant schemes to build 63 additional units. Tilia Homes are already on site and they have applied for relevant planning permission. It was noted that 28 properties would be affordable due to the legal requirements of the wider site, but the remainder of the houses, which would total 63, would be also be additional affordable dwellings.

There was a discussion in relation to Onward Houses seeking for a proportion of the houses being rent to buy and weighing this up with shared ownership.

Members were informed that there is also another site on Higher Road in Longridge. This is a large site which has full planning permission but the development has yet to begin. It is understood that Onward Homes are also considering developing on this

site, as such this could be another option for the commuted sum money in terms of additionality.

Members were advised of an alternative option being for the Council to buy more affordable properties in Longridge. However, one of the challenges would be getting RP's to agree to manage them on the Council's behalf.

Members were in agreement that officers should explore further the options that have been put forward by Onward Homes, this would include investigations into both the Alston Grange and Higher Road sites.

It was noted that the working group could only give a steer on this issue and the next Health & Housing Committee isn't until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023. As such, the Director of Economic Development and Planning will speak to the Chief Executive as to whether it would be appropriate to call an Emergency Committee.

#### 4 AFFORDABLE HOUSING TOUR - OPTIONS AND DATES

It was agreed that the Affordable Housing tour should take place on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 between 2pm – 6pm. Invites are to be sent to all Members of the Health & Housing Committee.

#### 5 ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

The Housing Strategy Officer confirmed that, following the review, officers wish to update three key points of the Allocation Policy.

1. To include that when people are in rent arrears, they need to show clear intent to clear those arrears, and make attempts to do so if they wish to remain on the waiting list.
2. To make it clearer that if people live outside of the Borough, but they have an immediate family living in the Borough, they can apply for housing but they do not receive any preferential treatment.
3. Noting that if a person is currently serving a criminal sentence, they cannot register to go the housing waiting list.

There was further discussion on the situation when a person has previously lived in the Borough and the Council's current waiting list generally. A report can be submitted to Committee regarding waiting lists, but there would need to be input from RP's as well.

#### 6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members gave consideration to a proposed housing scheme that is in the pre-application stage and gave their views.

The Housing Strategy Officer confirmed the first delivery in Barrow of the First Homes Pilot Scheme. This is a Government backed scheme which offers a 30% discount to first time buyers.

It was further highlighted to Members that between 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 there have been 149 housing completions, of which 71 of those are affordable rent.

The meeting closed at 1.57 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin [jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk) .