

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)

To: Affordable Housing Select Committee – 17 December 2019

Subject: Affordable Housing Select Committee Topic Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To discuss and agree the proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and general approach for the Review

1 Introduction

The shortage of affordable housing is a national issue. It is particularly acute in Kent and the South East, where there are overspill pressures caused by property shortages and prices in London. Household income has not kept the pace of the increase in house prices and this is impacting on the choice and affordability available to those who are in housing need.

Housing development needs to be of a sufficient scale to make sure that it is affordable and to make a difference. Every person should be given the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing. It is the aim of this committee to determine whether KCC can play a greater role in maximising the development of affordable housing in Kent.

2 Committee Membership

The Select Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council:

Mrs P. Beresford (Conservative)

Mr D. Brazier (Conservative)

Mr P. Cooper (Conservative)

Mrs T. Dean (Liberal Democrat)

Mr D. Farrell (Labour)

Ms S. Hamilton (Conservative)

Mrs L. Hurst (Conservative)

Mr P. Lake (Conservative)

Mr R. Thomas (Chairman Designate - Conservative)

3 Draft Terms of Reference

1. To define and put into context affordable housing.
2. To explore KCC's current role in supporting the development of new affordable housing in Kent.
3. To consider additional ways in which KCC can support the development of affordable housing in Kent.
4. For the Affordable Housing Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

4 Proposed Timetable (summary)

20 November 2019	Informal cross-party meeting for Committee to discuss the Terms of Reference of the review
17 December 2019	First meeting of Select Committee, to appoint the Chair and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review
Late December 2019/early January 2020	Christmas break
Mid January to early February 2020	Arrangements for hearing sessions, written evidence, visits and other evidence gathering methods
February 2020	Hearings
Late February 2020	Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations
March 2020	Report writing, production of first draft
Early to late April 2020	Easter break
Late April/early May 2020	Committee discusses the first draft of the report and suggests amendments. Amendments carried out accordingly
Mid May 2020	Select Committee share the draft report with Cabinet Member(s) and Corporate Director(s)
Early June	Select Committee to agree the final report
12 June 2020	Despatch for Cabinet
22 June 2020	Report presented to Cabinet
9 July 2020	Despatch for County Council
16 July 2020	Report presented to County Council

5 General Approach

It is proposed that the review includes a short period of desk-based research. Oral and written evidence will be obtained during the course of the review.

6 Evidence Gathering – Hearings

It is proposed that a number of hearing sessions, of 45 minutes each, will take place in February 2020. Hearings will normally be open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session.

It is proposed that Members remain for about 20 minutes after each set of interviews (normally no more than 3 in each set) to ensure that all views, key points and emerging recommendations are captured.

Details of suggested witnesses/organisations to invite to hearings are outlined below. Others may be suggested as the review progresses (written evidence may be requested from those who are unable to attend or cannot be included in the timetable).

- Senior KCC officers who can provide evidence and information in relation to affordable housing
- Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Kent County Council
- Representatives of Kent district councils
- Representatives of the Kent Developers Group
- Representatives of the Kent Planning Officers Group
- Representatives of other local authorities that can offer good practice examples with regard to the delivery of affordable housing
- Representatives of the Kent and Medway Housing Group
- Housing associations
- Academics, professionals, advisers and other witnesses who can make relevant contributions
- Representatives of local organisations supporting vulnerable people to meet their housing needs (eg. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Shelter and Porchlight
- Representatives of campaign groups (local and national) who can offer their perspective on affordable housing

- Representatives of Central Government who can offer a national level perspective on affordable housing
- Representatives of mortgage providers
- Other

7 Site Visits

Site visits may be arranged as part of the evidence gathering process.

8 Project Risks

The tight timescale necessitates a focused approach.

Recommendations:

1. To agree the Terms of Reference and general approach to the review of Affordable Housing.

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