

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Remote meeting via Zoom
Date	Tuesday, 14 July 2020
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Vice-Chair), Connor McConville, Terence Mullard, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Danny Brook and Councillor Patricia Rolfe
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Adrian Hammond (Housing Strategy Manager), John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing), Andy Jarrett (Chief Strategic Development Officer), John Bunnnett (Development Director), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Susan Priest (Chief Executive) and Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services)
Others Present:	Councillors David Godfrey, Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee (for agenda items 4 and 5), Tim Mitford Slade (Strutt & Parker), Victoria Seal (BNP Paribas Real Estate) and Mrs Elaine Bostock (Chairperson of Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board)

12. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Rebecca Shoob declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as she is a Board member of Otterpool Park LLP as from 30 June 2020. Councillor Shoob left the meeting entirely prior to the presentation of Agenda item 6.

13. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2020 were agreed and approved. The Chairman agreed that her electronic signature could be added to these minutes.

14. Vision For the Housing Management Service

This paper outlined the vision for the new Housing Management Service; describing the delivery principles that will provide operational clarity and accountability. The Vision is the long term destination for the Service; the initial work being to ensure the service is built on sound systems, processes and staff on which the culture and values will be shaped and embedded within the council.

As portfolio holder for Housing, Cllr David Godfrey, introduced this item to members. He then introduced Mrs Elaine Bostock, Chairperson of the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board, who gave a short presentation which is attached to these minutes. Mrs Bostock said that it is important tenants and leaseholders are involved and consulted upon various aspects of the Vision document.

Members felt encouraged by the Vision document and made the following comments:

- Carbon neutrality aspirations for new builds with the possibility of existing stock moving towards this as well.
- Environmental aspects of existing stock, retro-fitting for added efficiency. Energy grant availability in attaining green standards for all stock.
- The importance of neighbourhood officers building sustainable relationships with tenants rather than contact being made by multiple officers.
- Service and compliance efficiency
- Digital efficiency with the option of traditional services maintained for tenants/leaseholders.
- Whistleblowing and transparency – a live reporting system and dashboard information are planned.
- Safety – The Vision document is aspirational and a fresh start is needed, however it was noted that safety aspects could be added to the document.

Members and Mrs Bostock thanked officers for the Draft Vision statement and the positive way forward.

15. Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25

This report set out details of the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the district for the period 2020/25. It is proposed the draft strategy should be made available for an eight week consultation period.

Cllr Godfrey introduced this report and congratulated the Homeless Preventions team on their work. He advised members this draft strategy also relates to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee's portfolio with regard to street homelessness.

Points noted by members:

- Housing First Project, a positive development which has proved successful in other countries. Members suggested a briefing on this.
- Groups that are at higher risk of homelessness could be those in pupil referral units and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS).
- A high percentage of approaches for housing assistance was from single people which shows an increased need for house shares preferably instead of HMOs.
- Extend data searches using search engines and geographical locations, rather than solely using the Council's website, to monitor housing service searches.
- Members noted that over 30 street homeless persons were temporarily housed during the pandemic and work is ongoing with support. Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee stressed the importance of rough sleepers engaging with the Council for help.
- Looking forward, the economic fallout and the risk of job losses and evictions is high due to Covid-19, not forgetting how this will affect homeowners.

Members thanked the officers present and looked forward to the results of the Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy consultation which will be shared with this committee and Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

Members received and noted report OS/20/06.

Councillor Rebecca Shoob handed over chairman duties to Councillor Michelle Keutenius for the final item, prior to leaving the meeting entirely.

Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee also left for the remainder of the meeting.

16. Otterpool Park Business Plan - Initial Presentation

The Committee received a presentation on the skeleton of the business plan for the development of Otterpool Park Garden Town together with a timetable for its completion.

Mr John Bunnett, Director of Development, advised the committee that in presenting the business plan he was inviting members to comment with any issues they may have. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Comments from members:

- Infrastructure must be instep or ahead of housing development. Members were assured this was the plan
- Transport infrastructure, particularly concentrating on A20. KCC are predominantly looking at transport including cycling, walking and train links as well as highways.

- Traffic concerns, for example, speeds, volume and various junction changes will be looked at including the impact of the proposed Lorry Park at Ashford.
- Self build/Community led housing. An example used was a development called Marmalade Lane by TOWN in Cambridge. Mr Bunnett will provide further details.

Councillor Michelle Keutenius thanked all parties for the presentation given to members.

Tenant & Leaseholder Board Feedback

Housing Service Vision

Page 5



- ❖ Due to historic issues the confidence in the Council was limited.
- ❖ A meeting with Senior Council Officers on the 6th July, discussed the Vision for the Housing Service with the Tenant & Leaseholder Board
- ❖ The outcome is that the Tenant & Leaseholder Board have a good understanding of the Vision
- ❖ The Tenant & Leaseholder Board has not requested any changes to the Vision
- ❖ The Tenant & Leaseholder Board have summed up their comments about the Vision as “cautiously optimistic”
- ❖ The Board provided feedback on what they think “tenants being at the heart of the service” means.....

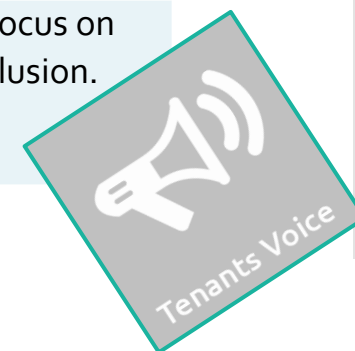
Tenant & Leaseholder Board Feedback

Page 6

Housing Service Vision

- ❖ There is an expectation that all tenants & leaseholders will be given opportunities to be involved in, consulted on, or facilitate the following:

Tendering process	Voids	Disabled adaptations	Garden Competition
Contract interviews	Stock survey	Annual conference for all tenants	Engagement with tenants at all levels
Environmental Improvement Programme	Have their own communication group (with logo)	Contractor contract meetings/KPIs etc.	Leaseholders involved with costings etc.
Estate inspections	Workshops & training	ASB – regular meetings with CSU (patches)	Validation of Satisfaction
Scrutiny panel for tenants	New builds – architects & plans upwards	Independent Living Schemes – estate inspections	renewed focus on tenant inclusion.



Tenant & Leaseholder Board Feedback

Housing Service Vision

Page 7



- ❖ Tenant & Leaseholder Board has been consulted on, or been involved in:
 - the Vision for the Housing Service
 - Interviews for senior specialist posts within the housing service
- ❖ We will also be involved in agreeing the patch areas for Neighbourhood Officers.
- ❖ We will need to recruit more participants from the wider tenant base to joint board members on the Scrutiny Panel and Communications Group.



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Otterpool Park Full Business Plan

Update 14th July 2020



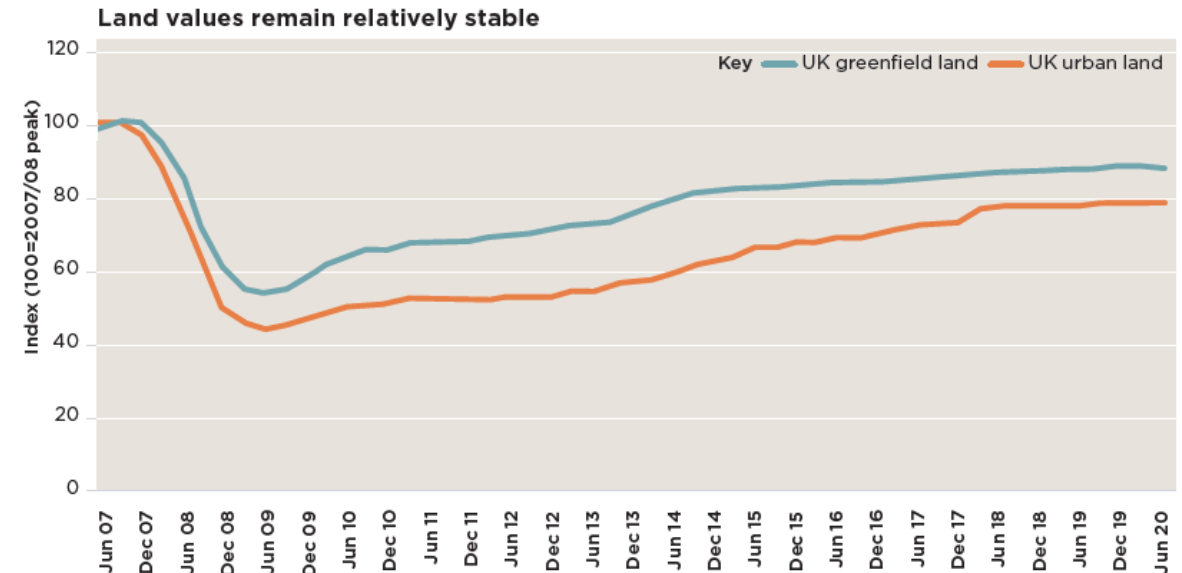
Introduction – progress to date

- November 2019 – Cabinet approves funding for Otterpool Park based upon BNP/PWC financial modelling
- December 2019 – Cabinet approves the purchase of land owned by Cozumel – i.e. the racecourse
- March 2020 – Council completes purchase of racecourse land
- May 2020 – Cabinet approves establishment of Otterpool LLP to focus on the delivery of the project – including skeleton of business plan
- July 2020 – first meeting of the board
- December 2020 – Full business plan to be considered by Board and Cabinet



Market Overview

- Understandably, transactions of development land have slowed significantly during Lockdown, but there are encouraging signs of an increase in activity
- A scheme such as Otterpool will be developed out during a number of property cycles and is more immune to land value fluctuations than smaller and immediately developable sites
- Deals that have progressed during Lockdown are seeing changes to payment mechanisms and deferment terms rather than significant adjustments to development land values
- Demand for strategic land and longer term opportunities requiring less upfront expenditure have continued without interruption during lockdown, although many land promoters took advantage of the Government Furlough Scheme
- Supply chain disruption and short term fluctuations of house prices have little impact on larger, strategic schemes such as Otterpool



Infrastructure

Completed

Preliminary infrastructure program

- A number of assumptions have been made to date to bring forward the development.
- Arcadis have provided indicative timings and indicative costings

Next steps

Enhanced investigations and program

- Reflection on infrastructure and servicing required to maximise commerciality and sustainability
- Establish the phase timings
- Appoint a team for detailed analysis



Land management - Conservation - Stewardship

Completed

- Land acquisitions completed
- Options completed

Next Steps:

- Engagement with external stakeholders
- Estate management / stewardship of land and buildings owned by the LLP
- The future of the castle and the nature of projects required



Approach to disposal

Completed

- Formation of company to act as Master Developer
- Early market engagement

Next Steps

- Appoint a land agent
- Soft market testing of residential land parcels
- Early engagement with RP partners
- Soft market testing of commercial and ancillary land uses to optimise delivery strategy
- Reflection on infrastructure and servicing required to maximise parcel values
- Plan identity and density of the parcels
- Consideration of pre-let opportunities, and potential to create investment product



Financial Plan

Completed

- Preliminary Financial Model demonstrating feasibility of the project

Next steps

Updating to reflect advances in:

- Details of phase 1 delivery
- Decisions around supporting land uses
- Replanning and recosting of infrastructure
- Market testing of land parcels
- Exploration around third party funding options



Risk Analysis

There is unavoidable risk and uncertainty around a scheme of this scale over this timescale.

Completed

- Identification of major risks and sensitivities in the financial model.

Next Steps

Establishment of risk register including understanding the impact and mitigation of:

- Revenue from and rate of parcel sales
- Changes in costs of infrastructure or borrowing
- Market growth or downturn
- Changes in external funding opportunities
- Policy changes around affordable housing
- Policy changes around Environmental requirements



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