



Special Urgent Executive Decision Taken by Chief Executive

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Decision: Meeting Oxford's Unmet Housing Needs – Allocation of Affordable Housing

Decision taker: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive

Decision Date: 3 April 2020

Is decision subject to Call-in? Yes

Deadline for Call-in: 9 April 2020

Is decision exempt? No.

Is decision urgent? Yes

Summary

To seek in principle support on the proposed approach to allocating affordable housing that is to be developed on identified sites within Cherwell district in order to meet an apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing need.

The countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA) identified the housing needs across Oxfordshire up to 2031. Further research and evidence have established that Oxford City will be unable to accommodate sufficient numbers of homes within that period to meet its identified housing needs.

Through the Growth Board, Oxfordshire local authorities are working together to provide the investment in infrastructure, housing and the economy that Oxfordshire needs now and in the future. The Growth Board has agreed an assumption that, in addition to the homes that are to be developed within the city, a further 15,000 homes are required to meet Oxford's unmet housing need to 2031. Under the statutory 'Duty to Cooperate', Districts have agreed to assist by providing an apportionment of the 15,000 homes. The number to be provided within Cherwell district is 4,400.

Decision

Resolved

- (1) That the following approach on the methodology for allocating the rented affordable homes to be provided on allocated sites in Cherwell District Council's Local Plan Partial Review in order to meet Oxford's unmet housing need be agreed:

“Oxford City Council processes all housing applications from eligible households who have a local connection to Oxford through residence, employment or family. When a property becomes available on an identified site to meet Oxford’s need within Cherwell district, the City Council will then work with the registered provider to administer the letting of the property and will nominate eligible households directly from the Oxford housing register. Should the City Council be unable to make a nomination or allocate the property to someone with an Oxford local connection, then they would offer the opportunity to Cherwell District Council to nominate a housing applicant from its housing register.”

Reasons for Decision

The agreement to utilise sites within Cherwell District to provide housing (including affordable housing) to meet an apportionment of Oxford’s unmet housing need is already in place as part of the Growth Deal and Duty to Co-operate.

Various options have been explored in respect of the arrangements and allocation of the rented affordable housing that is to be provided on identified sites within Cherwell district. The preferred option is administration and allocation of rented affordable housing being undertaken by Oxford City Council with a legal agreement, letting policy or plan, eligibility cascade and joint communications plan to be agreed with Cherwell District Council. This arrangement will ensure that Cherwell District Council is able to meet its statutory duties under the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ without adding administrative burdens and overly complex systems for customers and support providers to navigate.

Arrangements will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. A joint communications plan at the appropriate time will inform residents, organisations and relevant ward and parish Councillors about the development sites and how to access the affordable housing.

This item was due to be considered by the Executive at their meeting of 6 April 2020. However, in light of the situation with the Covid-19 outbreak and Government advice to social distance and stop non-essential contact, the Leader of the Council and Executive Chairman, Councillor Barry Wood, agreed that the meeting no longer take place as staff are being deployed to core functions to ensure business continuity at this time and that the decision be taken by the Chief Executive using urgency powers. All Executive members have confirmed they endorse the recommendations. The report has been circulated to all councillors ahead of the urgent decision being taken.

In accordance with the Constitution, a report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive advising of the urgent action taken.

Alternative Options Considered

Option 1: An Oxfordshire-wide lettings approach using either a common application form and shared ICT system or aligning prioritisation approaches by each of the Oxfordshire district councils.

Option 2: Cherwell District Council (CDC) processes housing applications and nominates eligible applicants to properties developed in the District using our own allocations policy or using a new policy agreed with the City Council.

Conflicts of Interest Declared and Dispensations Granted by Head of Paid Service

None

Attachments

Report due to be submitted to 6 April 2020 Executive

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive