

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 6.30 PM

Present:

Councillors: Sue Caul, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Nick Mawer, Linda Smith and Pete Sudbury.

Officers: Murry Burnett, Paul Fielding, Alex Jeffery, Nicola Riley and Dave Scholes.

Guests: Carys Alty and Jaffa Holland.

8 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies had been received from Councillor Barry Wood, Councillor Geoff Saul and Councillor Robin Bennett (substituted by Councillor Filipova-Rivers).

In the absence of Councillor Wood, it was agreed by members present that Councillor Sudbury would Chair this meeting of the FOP Housing Advisory Group. Councillor Filipova-Rivers then chaired the last 20 minutes of the meeting.

9 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes from the previous meeting would be amended to accurately record apologies that were received.

Aside from the above, the notes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

10 Forward work programme

Dave Scholes, Oxford City Council, noted that the forward programme appeared light at the moment but advised members that it would be populated accordingly following the FOP workshop on 26 September 2023.

Members noted an appetite for adding value to the housing landscape in Oxfordshire through action and questioned the value in coming together as a group where items on the agenda were for updates or 'to note.'

11 Oxfordshire Migration Landscape

Jaffa Holland (Housing Capacity Manager, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council) and Carys Alty (Head of Migration Policy and Partnerships, Oxfordshire County Council) gave members an overview of the housing needs generated by refugee schemes and updated members regarding the work of the Move On cell.

Members praised the work to date and commended the people of Oxfordshire for opening their homes to Ukrainian refugees through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Members questioned whether the Homes for Ukraine scheme further exposed the limited pool of Housing in Oxfordshire. Jaffa explained that different areas of Oxfordshire experience different issues with regard to housing need, but Jaffa added that the aim was to use the available housing stock efficiently by housing people appropriately according to family size and managing expectations.

Members praised the ambition to extend the Homes for Ukraine scheme to other cohorts and asked what was being done to make this a reality. Jaffa explained that finance would need to be considered as there was no other scheme (aside from Homes for Ukraine) that would offer host families the same level of funding. Jaffa added that the success would depend on people's goodwill, or they could try to influence funding from the Government.

Discussing specifically the housing of asylum seekers at a hotel in Oxford, members asked what could be done to address the length of time individuals had been there with little to do. Carys explained that the migration partnership had written to the Home Office to challenge a proposal to increase the number of asylum seekers being accommodated in hotels. Carys added that Oxford City Council chaired monthly meetings with local partners to raise, discuss and escalate issues and concerns. Officers present at the meeting added that Councils needed to be mindful of the funding they had available to support the migrant population and were therefore working closely with charities and volunteer groups/organisations to support them with funding. There was discussion at the meeting regarding public funds and whether asylum seekers had access to these. Members highlighted that asylum seekers had access to libraries, to education and to public health.

Members recommended that the reduction in the in the move-on period following a positive asylum decision should be a point for consideration on the risks that Carys discussed. Jaffa advised that this was being looked at and added that the migration partnership had asked local authorities for data on the number of people who had approached them as homeless.

Members asked about individuals with No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) and whether they have considered including that cohort in the consideration of the migration landscape in Oxfordshire. Members noted that local authorities would, by law, have to absorb additional cost as a result of immigration legislation (The Illegal Migration Bill). Jaffa responded that the legislation was complicated and whether people would successfully access dispersal accommodation and contingency hotels to make a claim for asylum was uncertain. Jaffa added that the number of people with NRPF in dispersal accommodation

and contingency hotels receiving asylum decisions was data that was being sought from the Home Office but was proving difficult to obtain.

Jaffa offered to update the FOP Housing Advisory Group at a later date. The Chair thanked Jaffa and Carys for their update.

12 Update on the Homes from Infrastructure Programme

There were no comments from members during the meeting.

13 Update on the Delivery of Affordable Housing across Oxfordshire

Dave Scholes, Oxford City Council, spoke to this agenda item and advised members that each housing authority has provided data towards the report. The report was positive in terms of looking at delivery to date and drew attention to the challenges also faced by each authority. Dave highlighted that stock holding authorities were facing challenges arising from inward investment, retrofitting and building & fire safety work. In registered providers, Dave suggested a reluctance to take on new schemes when there were already existing competing priorities. Dave concluded that the report indicated a fairly healthy programme of delivery at the moment with a number of large schemes in the pipeline.

There were no comments from members on this report during the meeting.

14 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group Meeting Notes

Members noted this agenda item.

15 Horizon Scanning

There were no comments from officers or members during the meeting.

16 Dates of future meetings

Members noted the dates of future meetings, all at 18:30:

- 11 December 2023
- 12 March 2024
- 09 July 2024

The meeting closed at 19:25.