

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCOPING DOCUMENT

Review Topic	
To identify the types of affordable housing the Council needs to build or acquire, to meet the needs of Milton Keynes residents.	
Origins of Review Group	Review Group Membership
Scrutiny Management Committee – 24/03/21 Approved by Scrutiny Management Committee -	Membership across the political groups on a 2:2:2 basis Councillor (Conservative) Councillor (Conservative) Councillor (Labour) Councillor (Labour) Councillor (Liberal Democrat) Councillor (Liberal Democrat)
Overview & Scrutiny Officer	Initial Scoping of Review
Alex Melia	Councillor Ferrans – March 2021 (V1) RT/AM/SH – May 2021 (V2) Reviewed by SMC Planning Group – Signed off by SMC Planning Group -
1. Purpose	
<p>What is the purpose of the Review?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inform the Council’s policies on what choice of house types it builds or acquires. • To provide evidence for Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) in considering what housing types it commissions from the proposed Local Housing Company (LHC). 	
2. Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the Review hope to achieve? <p>To understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the housing needs of residents over the next [5/10/15/20]years; - how the Council might go about identifying the quantity and types (size/tenure/single-multiple occupancy) of affordable housing that will be needed; and - what housing types will be provided by other suppliers and what types might be most difficult to source, and therefore most appropriate for the Council to provide by either building or acquiring. 	

- Why is the Review taking place?

The Council is proposing to step up its housebuilding programme, and to create a Local Housing Company to build more. The Council is also proposing to step up its housing acquisition programme. The decisions on what size of homes are to be built have been much disputed over the last few years and homelessness remains high despite high levels of building across the housing sector.

- What is the community importance and benefit?

Matching the housing to local need reduces homelessness, overcrowding, and debt, thus improving health, education and economic outcomes.

- How does it fit in with the Council's corporate priorities / scrutiny priorities?

It is one of the priority topics on the Communities and Housing Committee list but cannot be covered in a single meeting. Both the provision of housing, and the reduction of use and costs of temporary housing are priorities on the Council Plan.

- What are the opportunities to make a distinctive impact?

Commenting on the trade-offs between different types of housing and cost/land availability/site suitability. Make councillors more aware of the rationale before we have to comment on applications or explain it to residents near proposed sites.

- How will the review influence what the Council does?

Councillors may influence the decisions made. Officers will gain confidence of political support for a policy.

3. Proposed Outcomes

What are the proposed outcomes of the review?

Recommendations on the approach to deciding the size/tenure of housing to be acquired and to be built.

4. Background

- Is the review looking at existing policy or a new policy? New policy
- How does it relate to existing policy? Currently it appears that decisions on Council new build / housing acquisition are made on a one-off basis to address current demand and there is no long strategy.
- Has the need for the review come about from an issue arising from national or local events? Both.
- How does the issue relate to the Scrutiny Work Programme? As above.
- Are there any relevant community views to refer to? e.g. any previous consultation? Potentially – evidence from private sector on apparent demand and any evidence from Parish and Town Councils; or Residents Associations along with data on housing need from the housing need register.
- What is the gap between provision and need? See the housing need register.

5. Timetable

Establish a clear timetable:

- How frequently will the Task and Finish Group need to meet? At least 5 meetings over the course of July - January
- What are the key deadlines? None – ongoing programme so recommendations could slot in at any time, but decisions being made all the time.
- Who needs to see the analysis and who needs to contribute to the report? Cabinet Member and Property Services. Housing Needs.
- When will the Task and Finish Group report back to the Scrutiny Management Committee / the Community and Housing Committee / Cabinet? March 2022
- Proposed end date? By end of 2021-22 Council year at latest.

6. Methodology / Approach

What method of enquiry will be most suitable for the review?

- Desk-based review of papers
- Site visits / observations
- Comparisons with other authorities
- Interview officers – Housing and Social Care: housing allocations and homelessness prevention, Property Services: acquisitions and build, MKDP/LHC
- Calling witnesses to give evidence – other housing providers – maybe Shelter - maybe another Council if any have definite methodologies for this – also feed in witness statements and report on young people's and older people's housing just received by C&H Committee.

7. Evidence Sources

What types of evidence will be needed?

- Government guidance / legislation
- Service plans
- Evidence from other reviews – including previous evidence present to C&HSC and relevant T&FG eg Homelessness.
- Independent research articles and papers

Are there any stakeholders or interest groups the Task and Finish Group wants to hear from in addition to inviting them to the meeting? e.g:

- 'Call for Evidence'

Ensure there is a balance in the evidence collected e.g. views of activist groups weighed in consideration of an independent audit report.

8. Witnesses

Who would the Group wish to invite to its meetings?

- Cabinet Member
- Senior Officers
- Frontline staff eg
- External partners eg
- Professional experts
- Service users
- Stakeholders / Interest Groups

9. Site Visits / Observations

Scope for potential site visits / observations

10. Public Meetings

Meetings will generally be held in public, with the exception of planning group meetings

11. Officer Support

Director and Head of Service

12. Resource Requirements

- Scrutiny Officer overtime for evening meetings if applicable
- Attendance of Council officers at evening meetings and pre-meeting preparation work
- IT support for running meetings via MS Teams and broadcasting via the MKC YouTube channel

13. Risk Assessment

Identify potential obstacles to an effective review, including:

- Access and full participation via MS Teams for external witnesses
- Any future Lockdown / social distancing requirements
- Limited councillor / officer availability due to already busy workloads
- Lack of co-operation / availability from external witnesses

14. Review Mechanism

Agree a mechanism for following up / monitoring progress of recommendations which may be made in the final report:

Future scrutiny/monitoring of progress will be made annually by the Scrutiny Management Committee

15. Proposed Terms of Reference

1. To understand the housing needs of residents over the next [5/10/15/20] years.
2. To provide recommendations to inform the Council's policies on the quantity and types of affordable housing that are needed.
3. To provide recommendations as to what housing types might be most difficult to source and should therefore be for the Council to either build or acquire.
4. To provide recommendations to the Milton Keynes Development Partnership as to what types of housing it commissions from the proposed Local Housing Company

16. Background Papers

TASK AND FINISH GROUP PROTOCOL / OPERATING GUIDELINES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Task and Finish Groups are set up to undertake an in-depth investigation or review of an issue and operate on a relatively informal basis. Most detailed investigative Overview and Scrutiny work takes place in this type of working environment. Task and Finish Groups are a forum for information gathering and discussion between the Group and officers rather than a formal, decision making body and have no delegated powers.
- 1.2 This document sets out Milton Keynes Council's Operating Protocol for Task and Finish Groups.

2. Membership

- 2.1 Membership of each Task and Finish Group should include representatives from each of the political groups and can be politically balanced. Membership usually varies between a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 6 councillors.
- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group will elect a Chair from within its number.
- 2.3 All councillors who are not members of the Cabinet are eligible to participate in Task and Finish Groups.
- 2.4 Where appropriate, Task and Finish Groups can co-opt non-members with a particular expertise / experience / interest to participate in the review being undertaken, e.g., the Older Persons' Champion.

3. The Review Process

An initial planning meeting will be held involving the Overview and Scrutiny Officer facilitating the review, the councillors nominated to sit on the Task and Finish Group, and where appropriate, other Council officers and representatives of Partners or other outside organisations who may be expected to make a significant contribution to the work of the Task and Finish Group, in order to scope the review and agree a plan for the task.

The scoping document / plan should set out:

- (a) A clear statement of the scrutiny topic;
- (b) Proposed outcomes of the review;
- (c) The aim (or purpose) of the review;
- (d) The scope of the review – what will be included and excluded;
- (e) Agreed Terms of Reference;
- (f) Any specific outcomes to be achieved;
- (g) Specific concerns or issues, which should be addressed;
- (h) How the review will contribute to achieving Corporate Priorities;
- (i) An initial list of key stakeholders, partners or other agencies to be involved;
- (j) An initial list of witnesses;
- (k) How evidence will be gathered;
- (l) Any risks which may delay progress;
- (m) A timescale for completion of the task;

(n) A suggested mechanism for following up / monitoring progress of recommendations which may be made in the final report.

3.3 As well as receiving evidence from witnesses and scrutinising printed matter, consideration should be given to use of site visits, workshops and other activities in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the topic under review.

4. Witnesses

4.1 A Council's Overview and Scrutiny function has the power under Section 21(13) of the Local Government Act 2000 to require the attendance of members of the Cabinet and Council officers at Scrutiny meetings.

4.2 There is a statutory duty (Section 21(14) of the same Act for any member of the Cabinet or Council officer invited to attend a Scrutiny meeting to comply with the request.

4.3 Other witnesses from external organisations may also be invited to give evidence to Task and Finish Groups.

4.4 The Review Group should identify:

(a) the persons to be invited;

(b) the issue in respect of which the person's attendance is requested;

(c) the reason why the attendance of the person would assist the Task and Finish Group in its task.

4.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Officer facilitating the review will endeavour to give both internal and external witnesses as much notice as is practicable of the Task and Finish Group's request to attend a meeting.

4.6 The invitation will give details of the review being undertaken, including any supporting documents which may be relevant, state why the witness has been invited to attend and whether, or not the Task and Finish Group requires written reports in support of the witness's evidence.

5. Conduct of Meetings

5.1 Meetings of the Task and Finish Group shall be scheduled to enable the Group to complete its task within the timeframe identified in the scoping exercise. However, it is recognised that on occasion additional time may be needed to complete a task, but the agreement of the Scrutiny Management Committee should be sought for this.

5.2 Task and Finish Groups should aim, where possible, to hold the necessary meetings within as short a timeframe as possible so that findings do not become out of date before completion of the task.

5.3 Unless the evidence given to a Task and Finish Group is likely to be confidential or is exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, all Task and Finish Group meetings will be treated as public meetings and arrangements made to accommodate any members of the public who might attend.

5.4 No witness giving evidence to a Task and Finish Group will be under any obligation to disclose publicly personal information about an employee, a looked after child, or any supplier or recipient of council services.

ITEM 8

- 5.5 All Task and Finish Group meetings will be Chaired in a manner which ensures mutual respect between all those participating.
 - 5.6 The Chair will ensure that questions put by members of the Task and Finish Group relate solely to the issue in respect of which the person's attendance has been requested.
 - 5.7 Questioning should be aimed at trying to understand and explore issues rather than at catching witnesses out.
 - 5.8 Members of the Task and Finish Group should avoid making statements rather than asking questions.
 - 5.9 Witnesses, including Cabinet members, are not members of the Task and Finish Group and should confine themselves to answering questions put to them by the Group or supplying evidence requested by the Group.
 - 5.10 Members of the Task and Finish Group should operate within the agreed plan for the task and should not disclose or use any information/knowledge obtained through involvement in the group for any other purpose.
 - 5.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Officer facilitating the Task and Finish Group will take notes to record the evidence given at meetings and at site visits which will be used to form the basis of the final report.
6. Reports, Conclusions and Recommendations
- 6.1 Final reports need to be written in clear English which can be easily understood by the lay reader. Overuse of jargon and acronyms should be avoided and, if necessary, a glossary should be included as part of the report.
 - 6.2 Final reports should be based on facts collected, give a full picture of the issues scrutinised and contain both conclusions and clear recommendations.
 - 6.3 Reports should be an expression of the views of the Task and Finish Group on the basis of the evidence received and it is therefore important that members of the Group express their views at the drafting stage.
 - 6.4 When reaching conclusions and making recommendations, the members of the Task and Finish Group should endeavour to reach agreement by consensus. However, if agreement cannot be reached, a minority view on a particular issue may be included in the final report, or as part of a minority report.
 - 6.5 Depending on the topic scrutinised by the Task and Finish Group and the recommendations made, the final report will be presented to Cabinet, Council, a Scrutiny Committee or even an outside organisation for consideration and action.