

MINUTES OF THE POLICY, STRATEGY & ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE
MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD AT
PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY
ON TUESDAY 28TH JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Bowden, D. Ellis and J. Ellis

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C Caddock

Mr Jonathan Smith - Manager, Incrementum Housing Company

Apologies: Councillors Atkin, Evans, Fitzsimmons, M. Hearldon, T. Hearldon and Nelson
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe

Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to declare any personal interest or prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when the item is reached.

Councillor Bowden – Leader, Warrington Borough Council

Councillor Reeves – Governor, Birchwood Community High School

Councillor D. Ellis – Chair, Warrington Climate Emergency Commission

286/19-20 **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair informed those present that the meeting is not quorate.

Item 48 in the Town Council’s Standing Orders states: “*Except where ordered by the Council in the case of a committee, or by the Council or by the appropriate committee in the case of a sub-committee, the quorum of a committee or sub-committee shall be one-half of its members.*”

As all 12 Members of the Council are Members of the Policy, Strategy and Engagement Sub-Committee it requires 6 Members to be present for the meeting to be quorate.

The Chair stated that due to the Council not being quorate, the business on tonight’s agenda will stand undecided until Tuesday, 25th February 2020.

Those present can still discuss matters, receive reports and presentations, but cannot make any decisions or recommendations.

287/19-20 **PROPOSED CHATFIELD DRIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Mr Jonathan Smith, Manager of Incrementum Housing Group (IHG) attended tonight’s meeting to give an informal presentation to those present about the proposed housing development on Chatfield Drive, on the old Foxwood School site.

Mr Smith introduced himself and explained that IHG is Warrington Borough Council's (WBC) own housing company.

IHG is, however, legally independent of WBC and is a commercial venture, with WBC being the sole shareholder.

The objective is to create a long-term income stream for WBC mainly in two ways:

1. IHG can borrow money from WBC which will then be paid back to WBC at a commercial rate.
2. WBC, as sole shareholder, will be beneficiary regarding any dividends.

Mr Smith circulated illustrations to those present showing the proposed layout and design of the site and the houses and apartment blocks. There is a mix of one, two, and three-bedroom properties, aimed at attracting a variety of tenants; ranging from key workers, young people, professional couples, down-sizing adults, etc. IHG hopes to be operating flexible tenancy arrangements with options ranging from six months to ten years.

Mr Smith said that the homes will be available on a rental model, at a fair rent without expensive maintenance charges. Around 30% of the properties will be 'affordable rent', at least 25% below market value, and will be rented primarily to key workers (public-sector employees in one of a number of professions considered to be essential to society e.g. the emergency services).

IHG is trying to create a scheme that is innovative, has a green agenda and can reduce running costs where possible. The heating system, for example, will be a ground source heating system with a communal heat pump; which it is hoped will reduce 'normal' heating costs for tenants by around 50%. There will be no gas heating/cooking, everything will be electric.

Insulation is being carefully considered, ensuring that the choice will be thermally and acoustically efficient.

The company aims to be ecologically friendly, installing swift nests, bat and bird boxes and possibly hedgehog underpasses, if necessary.

The apartments are mainly situated to the back of the site, to avoid any sense of imposition on the street scene. All properties will have a traditional façade, to fit in with the surrounding properties, of masonry or brick (not cladding) with pitched roofs, although IHG is attempting to steer away from a 'mass-produced' development look.

Around 50% of properties are being designed to have full access for people with disabilities.

The homes will have a standard 12 year warranty but should have at least a 30-year design life – hopefully much longer. Every 7 years there will be a refreshment scheme for bathrooms and kitchens.

IHG will try to maintain and enhance the ecology of the area where possible. There are no tree protection orders on the site, but the older domestic trees will be retained wherever they can be. There are some ornamental trees that will have to be removed, but many of them are poor quality. However, for every tree that is removed, at least one will be planted as part of the development.

There are no plans at present for a hard-fencing boundary, it is proposed that the ecological topography of the site will create a natural boundary and green periphery. There has been a suggestion that a gym trail could be created around the circumference of the site.

On 3rd February 2020, a public exhibition event will be taking place at Birchwood Tennis and Leisure Centre, between 6pm to 8pm to allow members of the public to go along, look at the proposals, ask questions, etc.

Following that there will be a two-week consultation period during which people can make their views known, make any suggestions, or general comments.

Mr Smith said these will all be considered by a design group and, if necessary, changes to the designs can be made following the consultation period.

If there are no major issues that arise from the consultation, it is anticipated that a formal full planning application could be submitted during March 2020. There is a time constraint on deadlines, due to conditions being applied by some funding partners.

If the proposals are approved IHG hope to be on site in August 2020, with a two-year build total. There will be a phased handover of homes during that time. The apartments will be the last homes to be released onto the market.

Following some further general discussion about the proposals, Members thanked Mr Smith for attending the meeting.

288/19-20 **CLOSURE OF MEETING**

The Chair reiterated that due to the Council not being quorate, the business on tonight's agenda will stand undecided until Tuesday, 25th February 2020. All agenda items will be incorporated into the February 2020 meeting.

The Chair declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm