

CO-OPERATIVE SCRUTINY BOARD

URGENT DECISIONS



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

The Chair signed one urgent key decisions relating to the City Strategic Site Acquisition.

The purpose of the decision was as follows –

1. To allow the Council to proactively address urban blight and bring forward one of the city's key sites for redevelopment and regeneration;
2. To proactively 'drive' the delivery of additional hotel accommodation in advance of the Mayflower 400 celebrations in 2020;
3. To proactively 'drive' the delivery of new residential apartments within the city;
4. To better control the detailed design process and mix of uses in advance of the submission of a planning application;
5. To increase the New Homes Bonus; Council Tax and Non Domestic Business Rates receipt for the Council;
6. To Create new training and employment opportunities within the city;
7. To de-risk one of the city's key development sites
8. To work with private sector developers to redevelop the site providing a new hotel and residential apartments.

The Chair signed one urgent decision relating to Homes and Community Agency (HCA) grant for site preparation works at the Former Whiteleigh Community Centre to deliver Starter Homes.

The purpose of the decision was as follows –

To support the Council's agenda of increased and accelerated housing delivery and outputs required to provide more decent homes supporting citizens to live and work in Plymouth. The housing waiting list currently has over 13,000 households in need of affordable homes in Plymouth. The Council aims to deliver 1,000 homes per annum for the next five years. In order to meet this target additional sites must be identified for housing development.

Following the announcement of the HCA Starter Homes Local Authority Funding Programme in October 2015, PCC identified the Former Whiteleigh Community Centre as a site with potential to benefit from this award. This was the only site that met the HCA's eligibility criteria as other PCC sites had been identified in the Council's five year land supply for housing.

PCC successfully bid for £407,825 of grant from the HCA Local Authority Starter Homes Programme to deliver site preparation works to enable delivery of Starter Homes. PCC is the freeholder of the site and there is a 64 year lease to Pemberton Homes.

An Urgent Executive Decision was presented to and signed by Councillor Evans and Councillor James on 23 December 2015. The decision, which was subject to the council receiving written consent from the HCA allowing PCC to transfer the benefit of the grant to Pemberton Homes, was urgent as the deadline for signing the HCA Funding Agreement was the 24 December 2015. However, the HCA advised on the 24 December 2015 that the council could not transfer the grant because of State Aid requirements and the German land decision, thus the decision cannot be implemented. The council has been granted an extension of time until the 15 January 2016 to find a solution to the State Aid problem and sign the HCA Funding Agreement.

The new proposal, which was developed in collaboration with the HCA, involves Pemberton Homes surrendering the existing lease. The council will then appoint Pemberton Homes as its contractor to undertake site preparation works using the exempt contracts procedure, which requires approval from the Head of Service, Head of Strategic Procurement and Head of Legal Services.

The grant can be drawn down by PCC once the contract is in place – this must be no later than the 31 March 2016 in accordance to the HCA Funding Agreement.

The council will grant a new lease to Pemberton Homes on completion of the site preparation works. The new lease will be subject to a premium to reflect the uplift in value as a result of the site clearance works.

The funding will help to deliver c. 27 Starter Homes, which will generate c. £261,385 of New Homes Bonus and c. £21,250 of new council tax revenue per annum.