MATTERS TO BE REFERRED TO CABINET FOR CONSIDERATION

05/15 – HARROGATE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN – INTERIM AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY: A report in the name of the Head of Planning and Development was submitted, attached to which was the proposed Interim Affordable Housing Policy and Guidance for the purposes of determining planning applications. The report would also be considered by Cabinet on 17 June 2015, along with the Committee’s comments and recommendations on the proposed Interim Policy. The Senior Planning Policy Officer (SPPO) referred to paragraph 5.2 of the report and to the Government’s changes in November 2014 to national policy relating to Section 106 planning obligations and the corresponding new National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). Further changes had been made to the NPPG in March 2015. These had impacted upon the application of existing affordable housing policy within Harrogate District, principally on the thresholds at which such housing could be required. Consequently, the proposed Interim Policy would provide an up-to-date policy position for the District until the new Local Plan was in place and which would replace the current saved Local Plan Policy H5. Policy H5 required affordable houses to be provided in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon on schemes of 15 or more dwellings or on site of 0.5ha or more, irrespective of number and in all other areas on schemes of three or more dwellings or on sites of 0.1ha more, irrespective of number.

The Interim Affordable Housing Policy and Guidance document was attached to the report and the SPPO reported that, in future, the Council would negotiate for the provision of an element of affordable housing on developments:

- in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon and non-designated rural areas on proposals of 11 or more dwellings, or where any net increase in floor space exceeded 1000sqm gross internal area – 40% of the proposed dwellings should be affordable and provided on site, and
- in Designated Rural Areas on proposals of 6 to 10 dwellings, or proposals where any net increase in floor space exceeded 1000sqm – 40% of the dwellings should be affordable and provision would be required by payment of a commuted sum of broadly equivalent value. On proposals of 11 or more dwellings – 40% of the proposed dwellings should be affordable and provided on site.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer explained that the Government’s intention in introducing the changes to policy had been to increase housing supply by reducing the construction costs on small scale new build schemes. The document also contained guidelines and procedures to explain how adopted Core Strategy Policy HLP3 in respect of Rural Exception Sites was implemented and explained the mechanisms that would be used to deliver and manage affordable homes.

The Chair then invited Members’ questions to which the Planning Officers, the Housing Enabler and Valuation Surveyor (HE&VS) and Principal Solicitor responded. With respect to affordable housing provision on greenfield sites the figure of 50% in the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document was to be reduced back to 40% as evidence
showed that amount could be delivered across the board. Members discussed the annual targets for affordable housing provision, which were not currently being met, and wished to see performance monitoring and challenge in place. With regard to the size of dwellings, the HE&VS advised that the authority was firm that developers should follow guidelines regarding size and space, based on the Homes and Communities Agency specifications, and that Section 106 agreements regularly achieved these.

In answer to a Member’s question, the Principal Planning Policy Manager agreed to provide Members with details of the villages listed in each of the Designated Rural Areas, which was endorsed by the Committee. The Principal Solicitor reported that the Interim Policy conformed to national policy which was intended to help ‘small builders’ although that term had not been defined specifically. The HE&VS explained the role’s valuation responsibilities, for which a fee structure payable by developers was in place.

**RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

That (1) Cabinet be informed of the comments included in the preamble above, and particularly:

(i) that the Committee would wish the Performance Panel to be requested to consider the issue of monitoring and challenging performance information in connection with the provision of affordable housing in the district; and

(ii) the Committee considers it important that the size and space requirements based on figures from the Housing and Communities Agency continue to be supported by the Council; and

(2) Cabinet be advised that the District Development Committee supports the approval of the Interim Affordable Housing Policy and Guidance.

(5.31 pm to 6.00 pm)