

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 28 June 2006

Subject: **Future Work Programme and Review of the Regional  
Housing Strategy**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director,  
South East England Regional Assembly

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Regional Housing Board endorse the work programme set out in Annex I.

**Purpose of Report:**

To set out the programme for updating the Regional Housing Strategy.

**Key Issues:**

To agree the work programme, noting that there is likely to be a requirement to provide initial advice to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on funding allocations for 2008-11 in spring 2007.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At the Board's meeting on 2 May 2006, an outline programme of work for the Board was proposed. The work programme reflected the need to review the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) to take into account the outcome of the ongoing programme of research. It also reflected the requirement to review the RHS in advance of the region providing advice to the Secretary of State in respect of investment allocations for the Regional Housing Pot for the period 2008-11. It is anticipated that this advice will be required as part of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 1.2 The review of the RHS provides the opportunity for the region to realise the potential arising from the merger of the Regional Housing Board and Regional Assembly (in its role as Regional Planning Body) to achieve a higher degree of co-ordination between the planning for housing provision and its delivery.

## **2. Updating the Regional Housing Strategy**

- 2.1 While the overall strategic priorities set out within the Regional Housing Strategy are unlikely to require substantive amendment, the balance of investment priorities will need to be reviewed. Such a review will need to take into account the outcomes of the research work commissioned by the Board and its partners since the publication of the RHS. This may require changes to be made to the content of the Strategy.
- 2.2 The review will need to review progress in delivering affordable housing across the region. This will enable the Board to consider whether gaps exist in respect of housing delivery that have an inter-regional dimension. The review will also need to include a preliminary assessment of the outcome of previous decisions in respect of the allocation of housing funds.
- 2.3 The review of the Strategy will enable more to be included on topics which receive limited attention in the current RHS, such as consideration of spatial issues, the review of the list of strategic housing sites, and the need to consider how to meet the range of diverse needs across the region. The latter point is particularly relevant in considering how need varies with respect to age and disability. The review also provides the opportunity to consider in greater detail the issue of empty homes and their potential role within the RHS. Other issues to be considered as part of the review include homelessness, homeless prevention and housing options.

## **3. Provisional Timetable**

- 3.1 The delay in the timing of the Comprehensive Spending Review means that the submission of advice on the allocation of housing funds cannot follow the same timetable as last time. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has yet to issue guidance on the timing and detail required in any advice submitted for their consideration. However early indications are that the Board may be asked to submit preliminary

recommendations before an announcement on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. This suggests that the Board should have a draft of the revised RHS ready by May/June 2007.

- 3.2 It is on this basis that a provisional timetable for undertaking the review of the RHS has been prepared. The proposed timetable is set out in Annex I and comprises three main stages of work:
- A review of the outcome of the Board's research programme and further consideration of potential gaps in the current RHS;
  - Refinement of the strategy component set out in the RHS and development of recommendations on allocations for the Regional Housing Pot for the period 2008-11; and
  - Consultation with stakeholders.
- 3.3 Practical considerations arising from the time required to incorporate the outcome of the current programme of research into an updated RHS are such that it will not be possible to undertake a formal consultation with stakeholders and meet the anticipated May deadline for advice to DCLG if the latter date is confirmed.
- 3.4 However it is important to bear in mind that the preparation of the current RHS involved an extensive process of stakeholder engagement and that it is not anticipated the overall strategic priorities will change substantially as a result of the review. In addition the views of the officer groups advising on housing related issues will be actively sought as part of the preparation of the revised Strategy. There is also an opportunity to use events such as the Chartered Institute of Housing South East Conference in March 2007 as a means of raising awareness and seeking informal stakeholder views on the draft of the revised RHS.
- 3.5 The work programme has therefore been prepared on the presumption that any advice submitted to DCLG in May/June 2007 would be treated as provisional advice. There would then follow a programme of formal consultation with stakeholders across the region during summer 2007 that would enable the revised RHS to be considered formally by the Board in autumn 2007, at which point the Board would be able to confirm its advice to DCLG. Initial indications from DCLG are that this approach would be acceptable.
- 3.6 A draft programme for stakeholder consultation will be presented to the Board for its consideration at the next meeting.

#### **4. Financial Considerations**

- 4.1 The work programme of the RHB has been supported in the past through contributions – both in-kind and in cash – from the Board members. Without these contributions the Board would not have been able to develop the RHS. If the update of the RHS is to be progressed it is important that Board members continue to support its activities in this way.

- 4.2 During the current financial year the main resource requirements will be staff time to support the Project Team managing the work programme. In addition it is anticipated that a budget provision of approximately £30,000 needs to be made available to procure external assistance in updating the RHS. This commission would help the Project Team to draw out some of the key linkages emerging from the research programme and assist in identifying the issues and options for consideration by the Board.
- 4.3 Further expenditure would be required in the next financial year (2007/08) in connection with the design, printing and distribution of a draft of the updated RHS for stakeholder consultation. Financial provision will also need to be made for stakeholder consultation events during summer 2007.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 The Board's work programme provides for an annual Away Day. This is currently scheduled to be held on the same day as the Board's next meeting in the autumn. The Away Day will provide the opportunity for the Board to reflect on the outcome of the research programme and to consider in greater detail the work required to update the RHS.

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## Review of the Regional Housing Strategy Outline of Work Programme

Date	Activity
<b>2006</b>	
July	Scoping session – project team
July – Aug	Project team develops brief for and commissions research review; develops draft consultation programme.
Oct	<b>Board Meeting/Away Day</b> ; consider proposals for consultation programme; discussion on topics requiring greater attention in the strategy update.
Oct	Newsletter publicises review process
Sept- Dec	Research review & analysis; develop proposals on the balance of strategic priorities.
Dec	Workshop with advisory groups (Housing Advisory Group, Regional Housing Forum, Affordable Housing Task Group) to discuss emerging issues and advise Board on potential options.
Dec	<b>Board Meeting</b> : to discuss emerging issues and potential options.
<b>2007</b>	
Jan – early March	Project team to develop draft of updated strategy and proposals for investment allocations from Regional Housing Pot (RHP). Any supplementary work emerging from the review period to be completed in parallel.
Early March	<b>Board Meeting</b> : consider draft of updated strategy.
March 13 -15	CIH SE conference: workshop sessions to share and seek feedback on draft strategy themes.
April – May	Project team to refine draft strategy and prepare for consultation with stakeholders.
Early May	<b>Board Meeting</b> : to agree provisional submission to DCLG.
May	Submit provisional draft of revised RHS to DCLG and initial RHP recommendations.
May – Aug	Stakeholder consultation on draft of revised strategy; analyse responses; amend strategy.
Sept	<b>Board Meeting</b> : agree final version of strategy and future work programme.
Oct	Submit revised strategy and final RHP recommendations to DCLG.
Oct	Print and launch revised strategy.
Oct	<b>Board Meeting/Away Day</b>