

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 2 MARCH 2007**

Present:

Board Members

Trevor Beattie	English Partnerships
Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright	Regional Assembly (Chairman)
Fiona Cruickshank	Housing Corporation
Howard Ewing	GOSE
Douglas Horner	Regional Assembly
Cllr Keith House	SEEDA
Ann Santry	Regional Assembly
Cllr Don Turner	Regional Assembly

Officers

Martin Tugwell  
Alison Bailey  
Cath Stubbings  
Louise Wilby  
Martin Nurse  
Kate Dallip  
Pat Tempany  
Steve Kethero  
Chris Woolf  
Leigh Herington

In Attendance

John Aldworth  
Lynne Croker  
Rob Cummins  
Andrew Fisk  
Andrew Palmer  
John Waterton

**1. Apologies and Substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Gillian Brown, Cllr John Goddard, Sharon Smith, Sheila Drew-Smith and Lee Amor. The following substitutions were declared: Fiona Cruickshank for Shelia Drew-Smith.
- 1.2 The Chairman announced that the meeting was Don Turner's last. The Board joined the Chairman in recording their appreciation for Don's work on behalf of the Board.

**2. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 January 2007**

- 2.1 It was noted that Howard Ewing is a member of the Regional Housing Board.

**The Minutes were AGREED subject to this amendment.**

### **3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda**

#### 3.1 Agenda Item 7

3.1.1 The Board was given an update on the first two of six planned Regional Housing Strategy Review consultation events. These had been held at Southampton and Canterbury. Common themes from the two events included:

- Cautious support for the use of innovative delivery mechanisms such as the Brownfield Land Acquisition Trust and Regional Infrastructure Fund;
- Acknowledgement of the need to look at the spatial geography used for allocating funds;
- Support for the need to consider issues of size and type of affordable housing was also acknowledged although opinions varied as to how this might be achieved;
- Rural housing issues were seen as potentially requiring greater consideration.

#### 3.2 Agenda Item 10 Para 10.7

3.2.1 Howard Ewing (GOSE) reported that he was currently clarifying with Communities and Local Government as to what the main focus of the Board was in respect of its consideration of the bids received for grants to provide facilities for gypsies and travellers. He indicated that the emerging advice was that the Board's views were being sought in respect of relative priorities. He clarified that the Minister has direct responsibility for the merits of individual bids. He undertook to provide further clarification for the Board at its next meeting.

#### 3.3 Agenda Item 11

3.3.1 The Director of the Housing Corporation had agreed to seek further information on the Seaside and Country Housing Scheme, referred to in the London Regional Housing Strategy. She advised that the position would be clearer after the Mayors' conference on the strategy at the beginning of March. She agreed to update the Board at its next meeting.

### **4. Housing Market Assessments**

4.1 The Board received presentations on two of the Housing Market Assessment Pilots supported by the Board; the presentations were made by representatives from Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) and Bracknell Forest Borough Council (on behalf of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities).

#### 4.2 PUSH

4.2.1 Andrew Fisk advised that PUSH had been formed to ensure the necessary economic growth for south Hampshire through quality jobs and a good standard of living matched by the need to secure significant investment in infrastructure. The first HMA had been completed in April 2005. An update of this had been completed in August 2006 thanks to the support of the Board.

4.2.2 The purpose of the update had been to improve understanding of housing market boundary issues and test the effectiveness and benefits of cross boundary collaboration. DTZ had carried out the technical work. The key recommendations arising from the assessment had been:

- The need for 28,500 affordable homes up to 2026;
- Maximising the provision of affordable housing, with a target of between 30-40%;
- Considering the requirements of specific groups, particularly older people, that will have an important influence on the way the housing market functions;
- Maintaining the system for monitoring the size and type of new dwellings;
- Focusing on design as well as mixed communities;
- Considering the establishment of a sub-regional delivery body;
- Provision of a broader range of dwellings in all locations;
- Providing a balance of size and type of dwellings.

#### 4.3 Bracknell Forest Borough Council

4.3.1 Rob Cummins advised that the Berkshire Unitaries had agreed that a Housing Market Assessment covering all of the authorities was the most appropriate way forward.

4.3.2 DTZ had carried out the study of housing needs. The study had identified:

- The current planned level of affordable housing will only meet one third of the current need;
- The need to reduce the 600 homeless households in temporary accommodation;
- The need to address the severe overcrowding in both the social rented and private rented sector in Reading and Slough.

4.3.3 Two major stakeholder events had taken place which had identified the following issues:

- Demographic changes are creating a greater need for single person households, in particular to meet the needs of older people;
- There is a lack of family sized accommodation in the social rented sector;
- The need for a greater focus on social rented housing and less focus on intermediate tenure;
- Uncertainty about the supply of future funding for investment in affordable housing;
- Developers confirmed the strength of the housing investment market.

4.4 Dawn Petis, (Oxfordshire County Council; another of the Board's pilot projects) advised that their work had identified common issues with PUSH and the Berkshire Unitaries.

- 4.5 It was felt that the quality of the data was important to give credibility to cross boundary collaboration. Also that it is reasonable to base Choice Based Letting on travel to work areas. There was also uncertainty over how private sector renewal linked with HMA areas their priorities are different.
- 4.6 The Planning Implementation Director noted that the evidence suggested that there may be merit in the Board providing guidance on the most appropriate boundaries for future work on Housing Market Assessments. He noted that the submission of the draft South East Plan and the update to the Regional Economic Strategy created a situation in which there would be merit in updating the previous work undertaken by DTz on identifying housing market areas. He indicated that the Board may need to take a more proactive role in future in identifying the need for specific authorities to work together on future assessment work.
- 4.7 The Housing Team Leader (GOSE) advised the Board that CLG had potentially £40,000 in Planning Delivery Grant available from the current financial year to support further work on HMAs. It was intended to provide an impetus for local authorities. Interested local authorities had been asked to submit applications to receive a proportion of the PDG available. It was suggested that the Board's views would be sought on the merits of any applications received.
- 4.8 There was considerable concern amongst the majority of Board members at the timescale associated with the proposal. The consensus of the meeting was that the Board felt it inappropriate to support this particular initiative due to concerns about the time constraints. In particular it was concerned as to whether the proposal offered good value for money. In the circumstances the Board resolved not to comment on merits of any proposals submitted for consideration.
- 4.9 Douglas Horner suggested that, in the absence of a single entity to address the many issues relating to the accommodation, and related needs, of older people that the Regional Housing Board might be the appropriate forum to take forward a piece of work on this issue. The Planning Implementation Director indicated that the Project Team would give consideration to the matter and provide a report for a future meeting of the Board.

**The Board AGREED to:**

- 1. Note the outcome of the pilot sub-regional housing assessments.**
- 2. Consider the need for further guidance to be issued to local authorities undertaking strategic housing market assessments.**
- 3. Seek a meeting with Communities and Local Government in order to resolve the outstanding issues arising from the pilot assessments.**
- 4. Continue to monitor progress with strategic housing market assessments in the region.**

## **5. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing**

- 5.1 The Planning Manager introduced the report which focused on those aspects of the new PPS in so far as they related to the work of the Board.
- 5.2 She drew particular attention to the dislocation within PPS3 which stressed the importance of development on previously developed land but did not allow for the planned use of windfall sites.
- 5.3 Board members expressed differing views in respect of the guidance in respect of the planning for windfalls. For some the new guidance acted an encouragement to local authorities to provide the evidence as to why planning to accommodate housing targets through the use of windfall sites was appropriate. Others argued that the new guidance could have a perverse effect in that it might require local authorities to make greater provision for greenfield sites. It was noted that it was important to take the character of an area into account to avoid high density arising from the use of windfall sites.
- 5.4 The Planning Manager highlighted the concern about PPS3 retaining an indicative threshold for sites required to make a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing. She reported that anecdotal evidence continued to be received of local authorities have great difficulty in persuading the Planning Inspectorate as to the merits of adopting a threshold lower than the indicative national figure.
- 5.5 The Chairman drew the Board's attention to the inconsistencies in paras 46 and 50 of PPS3 with regard to developing housing density policies. She also drew the Board's attention to para 20 in consultation document PPS Planning and Climate Change which could be interpreted in different ways. Howard Ewing agreed to seek clarification on both these matters.

### **The Board AGREED to:**

- 1. Highlight to Communities and Local Government the extent to which further work is required to develop strategic housing market assessments as a planning tool;**
- 2. Highlight to Communities and Local Government the need to ensure that the approach to windfall sites does not create a perverse effect in the region**
- 3. Draw to the attention of local planning authorities the opportunity to set lower thresholds for seeking contributions for affordable housing and actively support local authorities seeking to establish lower thresholds in their local development documents.**

## **6. Planning Gain Supplement**

- 6.1 The Planning Implementation Director introduced the report which focused on the definition and role of the common starting point as a contribution to the level of affordable housing as part of the revision of Section 106 Agreements.

### **The Board AGREED to:**

- 1. Seek clarification from Communities and Local Government on how the common starting point might be applied.**
- 2. Work with stakeholders across the region with a view to identifying the potential value for the common starting point taking into account regional and sub-regional variations.**
- 3. Seek clarification from Communities and Local Government on whether the intention is to require affordable housing to be liable for the proposed Planning Gain Supplement.**

## **7. Private Sector Housing Renewal: Progress Report**

- 7.1 The Project Lead Officer (GOSE) introduced the report and drew the Board's attention to the current position outlined in para 6.1 and the particular issues outlined in para 2.3. He advised that SEEDA is leading the work on behalf of the Board, with support from GOSE.
- 7.2 He reported good progress and a greater understanding of the benefits of focusing investment that improved energy efficiency of the housing stock. He advised that consultation events had highlighted the great demand for new loan and equity release facilities which marked a move from a grant to a loan culture. He suggested that the Board was well placed to offer leadership in this area.
- 7.3 He requested that the Board gave consideration to the development of opportunities for the establishment of a regional champion or beacon status so that private sector housing managers, in local authorities, were supported in taking the work forward. It was suggested that the Board might wish to encourage proposals for future funding from sub regional partnerships rather than by individual local authorities. He recommended the creation of specific guidelines against which bids would be prioritised and assessed and the formation of clear monitoring arrangements.

### **The Board AGREED to:**

- 1. Support the principle of allocating future funding for improvements to private sector housing using a criteria based approach;**
- 2. Develop an approach that encompasses the issues identified in paragraph 2.3 of this report;**

3. **Note the progress made to date in developing detailed proposals to target investment in private sector housing renewal and request that a detailed proposal be presented to a future meeting of the Board for its consideration.**

## **8. National Affordable Housing Programme: Progress Report**

- 8.1 The Director of the Housing Corporation outlined the progress made at the end of December 2006 against the targets for the Corporation's Programme for 2006-08. She explained that the expanded Open Market Homeline meant that there had been an initial fall in numbers which would mean that this year's target relating to the Key Worker Living Programme would not be met. She advised that this had been accepted by DCLG.
- 8.2 It was acknowledged that whilst expenditure in the third quarter of the year was currently not on target, the Housing Corporation was working with housing associations to ensure that the money was better spent. The Board was advised that planning issues were beginning to impact on the ability to deliver housing and it would be prudent in future years not to seek to fully commit the entire regional programme in order to provide some flexibility to respond to proposals as they achieve planning permission through the course of the year.

### **The Board AGREED:**

1. **To note the content of the report.**
2. **The presentation of the current report as the most appropriate format for future reports.**

## **9. Regional Infrastructure Fund**

- 9.1 The Planning Implementation Director referred the Board to the debate at the last meeting of the Regional Housing Board, (Agenda Item 6 - Regional Housing Strategy - Funding Options 2008-11). He advised that the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) had been debated at the last meeting of the Executive Committee and the (RPC) and that this report provided background information arising from these two meetings.
- 9.2 He advised that the key issue related to the recycling of funding to enable action. He cited the example of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area where the assessor had identified a potential role for the public sector to act as a catalyst for investment. It was noted that discussions, relating to practical arrangements, were taking place with the Treasury.

### **The Board AGREED to note the content of the report.**

## **10. Items for Information**

### **a) Communities England: Progress Report**

The report was noted.

### **b) Supplementary Evidence: Progress Report**

The report was noted.

### **c) Gypsies and Travellers Update**

The report was noted.

## **11. Any Other Business**

11.1 There being no other business the meeting closed at 16.30.