

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 5 September 2007

Subject: **Forward Work Programme**

Report of: Director of Development
South East England Regional Assembly

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Agree the focus for the Action Plan to be included within the update to the Regional Housing Strategy.
2. Requests the Project Team prepare a draft Action Plan for inclusion within the update to the Regional Housing Strategy.

Purpose of Report:

To establish a framework for the Board's work that will enable it to deliver its priorities during the three year funding period 2008-11.

To identify the key themes and draw out potential opportunities for the Board to take forward work that helps deliver those priorities.

Key issues:

The funding submission to Government identifies a number of challenges that the Board and its partners across the region will face in seeking to deliver the Regional Housing Strategy. The development of an action plan will provide a clear framework for the work of the Board and its partners. It will also help provide guidance to stakeholders across the region in helping to support delivery of the Board's objectives.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Board's funding submission identified a number of challenges in delivering its priorities. In order to ensure that the resources available amongst the Board partners are properly focused it is proposed that the update to the Regional Housing Strategy include an Action Plan.

2. Key Themes and Opportunities

- 2.1 Through its funding submission and recent decisions, the Board has already identified a number of areas of work that need to be taken forward in order to support delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy. These include:
 - 2.1.1 Strategic Housing Markets – the Board has reviewed the experience of the four pilot strategic housing market assessments. It has identified a number of issues that require further consideration if the potential of such assessments is to be realised. There is a need to feed the outcome of the Board's work into a broader debate on the future shape of sub-regional planning delivery arising from the outcome of the Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan and the Government's proposals set out in the Sub National Review;
 - 2.1.2 Stock Condition – the Board has identified the importance of ensuring that the funds available are effectively targeted. The Project Team are looking at the experience of work undertaken in the East Midlands to develop a stock condition model with a view to determining whether it may be applicable to our region;
 - 2.1.3 Decent Homes (Private Sector) – the Board has committed itself to allocating funding for such investment to be made on a competitive, cross-boundary basis. Bids for this funding have been invited and will be considered by the Board at a future meeting.
- 2.2 The funding submission also identified broader, often interlinked areas of challenge:
 - 2.2.1 The Ageing Population – the draft South East Plan identifies the demographic challenge facing the region. The implications of this for the region's housing stock and related services needs to be considered in greater detail. Particular challenges are likely to arise from under occupation of the social rented stock and the availability and servicing of sheltered and extra care housing;
 - 2.2.2 Sustainable Development – the funding submission identifies the Board's desire to act as a champion for delivering affordable homes of the highest possible quality. It also emphasises the importance of encouraging a move to higher standards at the earliest opportunity. Particular challenges are likely to arise in respect of the need to address fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency; encouraging the use of sustainable materials and construction methods in new and existing homes; ensuring the right type, size and tenure of affordable housing is provided;

2.2.3 The Health Implications – the funding submission identifies the important role that housing plays in supporting a healthy population. Particular challenges are likely to arise in respect of the role of housing in supporting vulnerable households, meeting the needs of the disabled, addressing overcrowding and the specific challenges facing young homeless people.

2.3 Although the Board and its partners will want to commit to particular pieces of work, it also now has the opportunity to provide regional leadership on a number of crucial areas. The Board may therefore wish to consider a programme of actions which could include championing a particular issue, supporting pilot projects and conferring accreditation.

3. Action Plan

3.1 This paper identifies a number of potential areas of work that, based on the Board's funding submission, might form the core of an Action Plan. That Action Plan will form the framework for the Board's work for the next three years. The Action Plan will be kept under review and adjusted in light of progress made in delivering the Regional Housing Strategy. It may also need to be updated to reflect emerging issues. The Action Plan will also provide guidance to stakeholders across the region as to their role in helping to support the delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy.

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