

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6 OCTOBER 2006

Present:

Board Members

Trevor Beattie
Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright - Chairman
Cllr John Goddard
Douglas Horner
Cllr Keith House
Darren Richards
Ann Santry

Officers

Martin Tugwell
Paul Bevan
Heather Bolton
Cath Stubbings
Louise Wilby
Fiona Cruickshank
Sharon Smith
Kate Dallip
Pat Tempny
Steve Kethero
Chris Woolf

In Attendance

Leigh Herington
Graeme Hough
George Summers

1. Election of Chairman

- 1.1 Elizabeth Cartwright was re-elected as Chairman of the Regional Housing Board.

2. Apologies and Substitutions

- 2.1 The Chairman welcomed Cllr John Goddard (RHB member) and Leigh Herington (Chairman of the Regional Assembly's Housing Advisory Group) to their first meeting.
- 2.2 Apologies were received from Ian Coates, Sheila Drew Smith, Cllr Don Turner, Alison Bailey and Lee Amor, the new Development Director at SEEDA.

3. Minutes of meeting held on 28 June 2006

- 3.1 The Planning Implementation Director explained that an amendment to the minutes of 28 June 2006 had been circulated relating to Agenda Item 7 -

Regional Economic Strategy. He advised that the secretariat believed that the proposed amendment more accurately reflected the essence of the Board's recommendations.

The minutes were AGREED subject to the following amendments to the Board's action for Agenda Item 7:

- 1. Comment on the proposed text for the housing element of the Regional Economic Strategy.**
- 2. The Board AGREED to lead on all three proposed housing-related actions including the development and implementation of a private sector renewal action plan for the region.**

4. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

Agenda Item 8a Brownfield Land Portfolio - update on the work of the sub-group - page 4 para 8.3

- 4.1 The Planning Implementation Director advised the Board that the letter, previously agreed, had been sent to local authorities requesting information on the availability of surplus brownfield sites. English Partnerships had agreed to lead on the analysis of the responses received. There will be a report on the results of the survey to a future meeting of the Board. It was noted that there were early indications of a good response.

5. Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Bids

- 5.1 George Summers, regional lead for Gypsies and Travellers at the Government Office, gave a presentation on proposals for the Bridie's Tan Transit Site at Lewes, East Sussex and the additional applications for future funding.
- 5.2 He reminded members that an earlier meeting of the Board, on 9 March, had deferred a decision on the grant application for Bridie's Tan Transit Site until the October Board meeting when a comparison with other transit applications would enable a benchmark to be used for deliverability and value for money.
- 5.3 In response to questions of concerns regarding the suitability and cost of the site George Summers provided further information about the proposals:
 - i) The road would be widened to accommodate the site and the contractors would be tasked with measures to reduce traffic noise.
 - ii) In responding to concerns about the suitability of the site for children the officer assured the Board that the budget included excavation work to widen the site, which would be fenced.

- iii) He advised that there is an established need for a transit site on the A27 with families staying up to a maximum of twenty eight days. A search for alternative accommodation had been carried out and none had been found.
- iv) He informed the Board that an on site manager would manage the site for East Sussex County Council.
- v) Members were advised that DCLG officials were satisfied that the Bridie's Tan proposals offered good value. It was noted that the provision of this kind of accommodation was generally more expensive than providing established housing and the cost of the proposal was in keeping with similar sites in other regions.
- vi) A question was asked about the potential impact, on the site, of the Southerham-Beddingham road improvement. George Summers agreed to check that the proposal for Bridie's Tan did not conflict with the proposed road improvement.

5.4 The Board's attention was drawn to the large number of expressions of interest which had been received for site grants for March 2007. The Board requested that the project team prepare a protocol for their consideration that would enable decisions on grant applications to be determined outside of the normal cycle of Board meetings.

The Board AGREED to:

- 1. **Approve the application for funding of the Bridie's Tan Transit Site at Lewes, East Sussex subject to the site complementing the Beddingham road improvement scheme;**
- 2. **Support the proposal that any under spend of grant funds in the current financial year would be made available for investment in other Board priorities, and that this would be recovered through an appropriate adjustment in the allocation of funds for the following financial year.**
- 3. **It was also AGREED that the secretariat provide a protocol, with clear criteria, to facilitate decisions by email in between Board meetings.**

6. Regional Housing Strategy Review and Consultation Programme - Report of Planning Implementation Director

- 6.1 The Planning Implementation Director referred to the last Board meeting when it was agreed that the secretariat would identify issues, including the framework for consultation, for the Board to consider.
- 6.2 The Board considered the proposal set out in the accompanying paper. It was noted that the timetable for the review had been adjusted to enable a 12 week consultation period to take place prior to the local elections in May

2007. The revised programme for the review required an adjustment to be made in the timing of some future Board meetings.

The Board AGREED the proposed approach and timetable to update the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) and approved the proposals for consultation.

7. Sub-regional Housing Market Assessments

- 7.1 The Housing Policy Advisor indicated that the report provided an update on progress. It was proposed that the Board consider the merits of preparing and publishing regional guidance on the application of Sub-Regional Housing Markets once the pilots had been completed. Such an approach would have the added benefit of enabling the implications of the forthcoming Government guidance to be taken into consideration. It was agreed that representatives of the pilots would be invited to make a presentation to the next Board meeting.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

8. Update on Financial Viability and the Role of Public Subsidy

- 8.1 The Planning Implementation Director advised the Board that local authorities had been consulted on the merits of developing a regional model for the assessment of financial viability. He reported that the results of the survey indicated broad support amongst local authorities for such an approach. He indicated that were this route pursued by the Board there was funding available from the Regional Assembly to support the development of a regional model. However it would also require a contribution to be made from individual local authorities. Existing work commitments meant that the earliest date that work could begin on the project would be early January 2007.
- 8.2 The Director South East of the Housing Corporation noted that they had recently made available their work on financial viability. It was suggested that this could form the basis of a consistent regional approach. It was agreed that the Housing Corporation be invited to make a presentation to the next meeting of the Board on their model.
- 8.3 The Housing Policy Advisor clarified that were the development of a regional model endorsed by the Board, the size of the financial contribution sought from local authorities would be lower than that referred to in the paper presented to the Board.

9. Items for Information

a) Regional Housing Forum Annual Report

- 9.1 The Chair of the Regional Housing Forum reported that the new Terms of Reference for the Forum had been unanimously agreed at its most recent meeting and that she had been re-elected as Chair.
- 9.2 The Planning Implementation Director informed the Board that a joint meeting of the Regional Housing Forum, Housing Advisory Group and Affordable Housing Task Group had been arranged for 3 November. This would provide an opportunity for officers to input into the initial stages of revising the Regional Housing Strategy.

b) South East Plan Partial Review: Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites

- 9.3 The Planning Implementation Director advised that a draft brief, setting out the advice to be requested by the Assembly from local authorities, will be presented to the Regional Planning Committee on 20 November. He also advised that a further update on the work associated with the partial review will be presented to the next meeting of the Board on 16 January.
- 9.4 It was suggested that it would be helpful to involve a wider range of stakeholders in the Task Group. The Planning Implementation Director suggested that this be considered as a response to the Project Plan.

c) Regional Funding Allocations - letter of response

- 9.5 The question was asked as to whether there was any action the Board could take prior to the publication of CSR07. The Chief Executive outlined the opportunities to engage in dialogue, in particular the input on housing on the cross cutting review, the submissions to CSR07 and visits by the Treasury. He advised that the Assembly will respond to the pre-budget review.
- 9.6 It was noted that non-Assembly members of the Board would receive information concerning CSR07 submissions to Government.
- 9.7 It was suggested that opportunities for the Chairman of the RHB to engage with Treasury and DCLG on the provision of future funding could be pursued.
- 9.8 The Board tasked the project team with the need to draw together the available evidence with a view to highlighting the linkage between infrastructure investment and housing delivery. He drew attention to the Annual Monitoring Report, which evidenced the benefit of public sector investment in the delivery of housing whilst acknowledging that current investment in affordable housing is insufficient.

10. Any other business notified to the Chairman before the start of the meeting

a) Future Investment Approaches

- 10.1 The Director South East of the Housing Corporation drew attention to the discussion document relating to Future Investment Approaches aimed at improving investment in social housing, creating longer term certainty and greater flexibility. She advised that the timing of submission bids was crucial because 50-70% of the funding would be allocated in the two year bid round, with the rest being allocated when development schemes become available.
- 10.2 The scheme was launched at the recent NHF Conference. Responses are required by 20 October. Local authorities and housing associations have been invited to respond.

b) Review of the Assembly's Constitution

- 10.3 The Chief Executive advised that the Assembly was currently undertaking a review of its constitution in part to reflect the transfer of the RHB and Regional Transport Board (RTB) to the Assembly. He outlined that as part of this review it was proposed that the Assembly's representation on the Board be increased by one, with the additional place being filled by a representative of the largest group on the Assembly.
- 10.4 The proposed changes to the Assembly's constitution would be considered at the Executive Committee on 20 October and the Plenary on 15 November. The Chief Executive requested that Board members express any concerns to him in writing at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.5 Clarification was sought on the rules associated with the use of substitutes for Assembly members unable to attend meetings of the Board. The Chief Executive confirmed that it was proposed to address this issue as part of the constitutional review.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Future RHB dates have been confirmed as follows. Please note that all meetings will be held at the MVWB in Guildford.

Tuesday, 16 January 2007	1.00 p.m.
Friday, 2 March 2007	2.00 p.m.
Monday, 14 May 2007	2.00 p.m.
Wednesday, 20 June 2007	2.00 p.m.
Wednesday, 5 September 2007	2.00 p.m.
Wednesday, 5 December 2007	2.00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.40.

Please note the earlier start time of the meeting on 16 January, 2007.