

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 15 May 2008

Subject: **Regional Housing Forum Update Report**

Report of: Chair of the Regional Housing Forum

**Recommendation:**

That the Board note the contents of this report.

**Purpose of the Report :**

This report is to update the Regional Housing Board on the work carried out by the Regional Housing Forum during the period June 2007 to March 2008.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Regional Housing Forum's work programme mainly reflects the priorities of the Regional Housing Board. As such, the work programme for the current financial year is still in development with the Assembly, being based on the Action Plan contained in the updated Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11.
- 1.2 While the updated Strategy and its related Action Plan have been in development, the Regional Housing Forum has taken on board a number of other tasks and consultations as requested by the various partner members of the Board.
- 1.3 Alongside this work, the South East Homelessness Forum (a sub-group of the Regional Housing Forum) has continued to provide an important sounding board and networking resource for a wide range of organisations and individuals who have a keen interest in the homelessness agenda.

## **2. Recent Work**

### **2.1 CLG Action Plan on Tackling Overcrowding in England**

In December 2007 the CLG released an Action Plan on Tackling Overcrowding in England. This Action Plan was a non-consultative summary of what the government has done so far and what it intends to do next.

The Action Plan identified future consultation by the CLG on changes to the statutory definition of overcrowding and to local authority allocations policies. As these are consultations on which the Regional Housing Board or the Assembly may wish to respond to, the Regional Housing Forum was asked to comment on the Action Plan in anticipation of the consultations, and to identify any regional work that might be helpful to local authorities in meeting a number of newly identified requirements within the Action Plan connected with tackling overcrowding.

### **2.2 Housing Corporation NAHP and Regular Market Engagement**

The Housing Corporation has made a number of presentations to the Regional Housing Forum on the current National Affordable Homes Programme and the new approach of Regular Market Engagement.

Feedback to the Housing Corporation on the perceived deliverability of the current programme and the new approach has been provided by both local authority and RSL Forum members. Information from the Housing Corporation on how it will be engaging with its delivery partners through the new Regular Market Engagement, and the priority areas of focus for the South East, will be disseminated further by Forum members through their individual organisations and/or the groups they represent.

### **2.3 Regional Housing Strategy Action Plan**

The Regional Housing Forum has been consulted by the Assembly on a number of occasions on the priorities for research and actions to be included in the revised Strategy's Action Plan.

Particular areas of focus have been:

- The future work stream on the Housing Needs of an Ageing Society, with the Forum identifying a number of priority issues and delivery implications in this area.
- Improving the use of the Housing Corporation's Economic Appraisal Toolkit.
- Additional mechanisms to support the Regional Housing Board's work to tackle barriers to affordable housing delivery, along with suggestions on how those actions already agreed can be delivered.

#### 2.4 Dissemination of Good Practice and Innovation

The Regional Housing Forum has received a number of presentations from a variety of organisations. These presentations are shared through the Forum members' individual organisations and/or the groups they represent, and so are disseminated widely throughout the region.

These have included:

- Presentation from *South Coast Money Line* on offering loans to home owners who would not normally have access to affordable finance.
- Presentation from Clear Springs on the *Bail/HDC Accommodation & Support Service*, which provides accommodation and contact support sessions for homeless individuals who are either remanded in custody, are defendants in court, or are prisoners who may be released if provided with suitable accommodation.
- Presentation from the London Borough of Kingston on *Breathing Spaces*, a private sector leasing arrangement aimed at tackling overcrowding for existing social tenants.

### 3. **Forward Work**

#### 3.1 Housing Needs of an Ageing Society

The Assembly will be bringing two items to the Regional Housing Forum's next meeting in July connected with this work area.

These are:

- The findings of a current research project on future care needs and costs.
- A presentation on the Department of Health's Homeshare pilots.

#### 3.2 Regional Housing Strategy Action Plan

A detailed work programme is being developed for the Regional Housing Forum, based on the Action Plan contained in the revised Strategy.

### **Sharon Smith**

Chair of the Regional Housing Forum

15 May 2008

Tel: 0845 408 6696

Email: [sharon.smith@a2hg.co.uk](mailto:sharon.smith@a2hg.co.uk)