

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 21 October 2005

Subject: **Regional Housing Board**

Report of: Chief Executive

Recommendation:

That the Executive Committee notes the report.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the Executive Committee on the work of the Regional Housing Board (RHB).

2. Briefing

- 2.1 The RHB is now meeting on a monthly basis to take forward actions identified in the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) 2006. The main points discussed at the last meeting on 28 September are summarised below.

2.2 Merger of the Regional Housing and Planning Roles

The Assembly reported an exchange of correspondence with the Chair of the Board indicating that the Assembly continues to be ready to accept responsibility for the RHB. Comments received from Board partners are largely concerned with matters of detail rather than principle. It now seems likely that ODPM will announce Ministers' wishes on the subject in late October. It will therefore be timely to hold discussions with the Board partners in early November to finalise working arrangements based on advice from ODPM.

2.3 Sub-regional Housing Market Areas

The Board agreed to write to local housing authorities setting out a framework and timetable for them to work in partnership to carry out housing market area assessments. These will be based wherever possible on the sub-regional housing markets identified by DTZ in work commissioned by the Assembly. Through this process the RHB aims to have sub-regional priorities identified across the South East in time for the next investment round, enabling spending recommendations to be made on a sub-regional basis.

2.4 Regional Funding Allocations

The Board received a report on the key housing issues for consideration and requested that a three-way meeting with the Regional Transport and SEEDA Boards be incorporated in the process to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

2.5 Work Plan

The Board received a detailed work plan setting out strands of work emerging from the RHS 2006. The strands relate to research developing the regional evidence base, delivery on commitments and monitoring. Progress will be reported at each RHB meeting.

2.6 First Time Buyer Element of the HomeBuy Programme

The RHB agreed to define locally essential key workers within the region by setting an income ceiling for eligibility and prioritising existing social housing tenants and applicants on council housing registers with demonstrable housing need.

2.7 Research

The Board noted relevant research planned by the Assembly and approved the proposed research programme for inclusion in the RHB work plan. This includes investigation of rural housing need as proposed by the Assembly's Affordable Housing Task Group. Research briefs on Private Sector Renewal and Supported Housing were also approved.

2.8 2006-08 Affordable Housing Programme

The RHB agreed to bring forward its January meeting in order to consider the bids made to the Housing Corporation and how these match up with the Board's strategic priorities.

2.9 Regional Housing Forum

A report was made on the steps taken by the Forum to restructure and re-launch itself as a more active and representative group able to undertake tasks in support of the Board. It was agreed in principle that the Forum chair should be co-opted onto the Board and that the continuation of this arrangement should be dealt with in discussions on the merger.

2.10 Away Day

Following a number of membership changes, the meeting on 26 October will include a visit to Gallions Eco Park in the Thames Gateway, enabling members to see a good example of environmental sustainability in a housing development and to develop their working relationships.

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Chief Executive
7 October 2005

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