

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 20 October 2006

Subject: **Regional Housing Board, 6 October 2006**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Housing Board

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Executive Committee on the meeting of the Regional Housing Board held on 6 October 2006 and preparations to update the Regional Housing Strategy.

## **1. Review session, 6 October 2006**

- 1.1 The Board combined its meeting with a visit to Milton Keynes and a review session in preparation for the update of the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). The programme for the morning included presentations by Milton Keynes Partnership and Milton Keynes Council and discussion giving insight into the housing issues faced by the growth areas.
- 1.2 The Board went on to take part in three workshop sessions on private sector housing, rural affordable housing need and supported housing. These sessions reported on recently completed research and the outcomes of the energy efficiency event recently hosted by SEEDA, enabling the Board to consider priorities and specific actions for inclusion in the RHS update.

## **2. Board meeting, 6 October 2006**

- 2.1 This was the first meeting to be held since the Assembly's full meeting in July. The first item of business was therefore the election of Chairman. Councillor Elizabeth Cartwright was re-elected unopposed.
- 2.2 It was confirmed that the letter, previously agreed, regarding surplus public sector brownfield land had been sent to local authorities and has generated considerable interest. Responses will be analysed by English Partnerships and reported to the next Board meeting.
- 2.3 The Board considered and approved a single application for a Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant. A number of bids for grant will come forward for consideration over the coming months following evaluation by consultants for DCLG. It was agreed that a protocol would be developed to enable Board members to consider bids in the intervals between meetings.
- 2.4 A more detailed programme for the RHS review, based on the criteria established at the previous Board meeting and including a framework for consultation, was agreed.
- 2.5 A progress report on housing market assessments indicated that the Board's approach should be dependant on the outcome of the pilot assessments and the content of PPS3 and final guidance from DCLG, all of which are expected during the next few months. It was agreed that representatives of the pilots should be invited to make a presentation to the Board at its January 2007 meeting to illustrate the practical issues involved in undertaking assessments.
- 2.6 Following a good response from local authorities to a questionnaire seeking views on evaluating financial viability and the role of public subsidy, the Implementation Director reported that there was good support for the development of a regional model and guidance. In discussing options for taking this work forward, the Housing Corporation advised that a model already under development may be suitable and could be made available for consideration.

- 2.7 The Field Director for the Housing Corporation agreed to investigate whether a presentation of the model with proposals for a way forward could be made at the next meeting. Certain concerns raised in advice to the Board and in discussion are to be addressed through liaison between the Assembly and the Housing Corporation.
- 2.8 The Board noted the following items for information: Regional Housing Forum Annual Report, progress on the South East Plan Partial Review (provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites) and the letter of response from Government on Regional Funding Allocations. In connection with the latter, it was pointed out that non-Assembly members of the Board were not aware of the recent CSR submission to Government. It was agreed that a summary of evidence of the Region's ability to deliver on affordable housing be prepared for submission.
- 2.9 Two items of additional business were considered. The Housing Corporation brought the Board's attention to consultation on a newly published discussion paper: Future Investment Approaches. A response is to be drafted for agreement to meet the closing date of 20 October.
- 2.10 Paul Bevan advised the Board that the Assembly is undertaking a constitutional review to take account of the transfer of the RHB and Regional Transport Board to the Assembly. He advised that equivalence of representation on the two Boards was sought, which would mean an additional member from the Assembly's majority party joining the RHB. He invited members to contact him to discuss any concerns.

**Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright**  
**Chairman, Regional Housing Board**

9 October 2006