

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSING ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2007

Present:

Gerry Wyld	Slough Borough Council
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Adrian Maunders	Guildford Borough Council
Barbara Compton	Southampton City Council
Barbara Thorndick	West Kent Housing Association
Graham Ashworth	New Forest District Council
Michael Crofton-Briggs	Oxford City Council
Pete Errington	Home Builder's Federation
Sunethra Mendis	GOSE
Yvonne Edgar	Thames Valley Housing

Officers:

Catriona Riddell
Catherine Stubbings
Dominick Veasey
Sandrine Mathard
Tom Kingston
June Cass

Apologies for absence:

Leigh Herrington	Kent County Council – Chairman
Alison Bailey	South East England Regional Assembly
Chris Kenneford	Buckinghamshire County Council
Ian Haynes	Milton Keynes Council
Dick Feasey	Kent County Council
Peter Shadbolt	Surrey County Council
Robin Edwards	Hampshire County Council
Sharon Smith	CIH SE Regional Committee

1. Welcome and introductions

Gerry Wyld opened the meeting and informed the Group that due to apologies from Leigh Herrington he had been asked to chair the meeting. He welcomed the members and asked for introductions around the table.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as read.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Item 3 – action point. A discussion had taken place between Alison Bailey, Yvonne Edgar and Barbara Thorndick regarding affordable housing delivery but no firm conclusion had been drawn.
- 3.2 Item 4 – An update on the Economic Viability Model was requested. Cath Stubbings stated that the Board had accepted the Housing Corporations offer to provide training on the use of the Economic Viability Model and 4/5 sessions will be offered in the region for local authorities. Offers of available office space were requested from the Group.
- 3.3 Item 6 – action point. It was explained that the report of the Overcrowding Sub-Group was not yet finalised. The main recommendations had been presented to the Regional Housing Forum meeting on 29 January by Jeff Holderness, chair of the Group, and would be circulated to HAG on completion.

Action: Cath Stubbings to arrange circulation to the Group on completion of the report

4. Regional Monitoring Report

- 4.1 The Chairman asked for any comments on the report, but requested more detailed comment to be addressed to Sandrine following the meeting.
- 4.2 The main point arising was in respect of the commentary on page 61 Indicator 51 - Total number of households on the housing register. Across the Group there was concern that the wording indicated that the emerging picture was not one of a housing crisis. It was felt that this section needed to be looked at for a more balanced conclusion. There was also concern that the housing chapter in its current form did not make the case for investment and that the separate sections of the chapter should be linked more closely.
- 4.3 The Chairman asked when comments were required and the Group was informed by end of week commencing 16 February 2007.

5. PPS3

- 5.1 Catriona Riddell stated that this was the biggest issue at the RPC meeting on 31 January, although it had not come up at EIP. All RPC members had concerns about the PPS3 approach to windfall sites. She informed the Group that a press release will be going out from a cross party delegation of Assembly members.

- 5.2 Graham Ashworth stated that there is an issue around whether Government imposes PPS3 and also what comes out of the Housing Land Availability Study. No guidance is available on this yet.

6. Housing Type and Size

- 6.1 Cath Stubbings thanked members that had joined the working group on this research. She asked the Group to regard the final summary circulated as a draft as there were still some presentational issues to be addressed with the consultants. Findings in the report tie in with PPS3 with regard to private sector delivery and the marked move to delivering smaller units in the public rented sector. The Regional Housing Strategy has already picked up the need to produce larger units and the report once signed off would go to RPC and the Panel for EIP.
- 6.2 There was concern in the Group as to how the work would fit with Housing Market Assessments and whether local authorities should give some idea on size and type.
- 6.4 Catriona Riddell stated the report is a tool and this year the Assembly intends to look at how to ensure family accommodation in high density developments. SEEDA is also looking at the economic implications etc of working at home and will take this forward in a number of ways.
- 6.5 Sunethra Mendis stated that she is keen to take the report to the CLG planning for housing team.
- 6.6 Reference was made to the Buy to Let research and a question was raised as to whether this showed high vacancies in town centres. Catriona Riddell replied that the report indicated this was an issue in London but not elsewhere.

7. Regional Housing Strategy

- 7.1 The consultation pack is currently being sent out. It is also on the Assembly website and the response form can be completed on line. There will be six events during the consultation period. Following the end of the consultation there is a short timetable for analysis to go to the Board on 14 May. Final version will be signed off in June. There will also be opinion polling of the public during the consultation period on size and type and affordability.

Action: Regional Housing Strategy to be discussed at next meeting on 2 April 2007.

8. RHB Update

- 8.1 Catherine Stubbings informed the Group that the focus of the last Board meeting was on RHS and the response to Housing Investment in the Region. The next meeting will address Housing Market Assessment Guidance. Two pilots will present on housing market work providing an opportunity to develop thinking on Housing Markets areas.

9. Gypsies and Travellers

- 9.1 Catriona Riddell informed the Group that to ensure local authorities have sufficient time to prepare comprehensive and robust advice to the Assembly following completion of their Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments the Regional Planning Committee had agreed at its 31 January 2007 meeting to revise the timetable for the Partial Review. The Assembly has since written to all Chief Executives and Heads of Planning in the region informing them of the timetable change.

Dominick Veasey updated the Group on the progress of the Assembly's jointly commissioned research to support the preparation of RSS reviews on Gypsy and Travellers by Regional Planning Bodies. The research has now been completed and will be formally launched by CLG on 1 March 2007. Following which the Assembly will disseminate the research to local authorities in the region as this research is intended to assist local authorities in preparing their advice to the Assembly in October 2007.

10. Regional Housing Forum

- 10.1 At the last meeting of the Forum the main topics for discussion were the Young Ex Offenders Sub Group report and the Overcrowding work that is now close to completion. The Group also discussed the Forum's work programme and explored general areas of work for when the Regional Housing Strategy Review has been completed.

11. Any Other Business

For information:

- 11.1 Kevin Williamson Director of the National Housing Planning Advice Unit will be meeting with Catriona Riddell and will discuss future working arrangements with the ERN.
- 11.2 The Assembly is advertising for another Regional Housing/Planner.
- 11.3 By September/October scoping work on the first review to update and roll forward the SE Plan will be available – This will identify many issues.
- 11.4 By February 08 RSS in place. HAG will have active role in the review process.

The meeting closed at 3:55 p.m.