

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 2 October 2006

Present:

Sharon Smith (Chair)	CIH SE Regional Committee
Karen Stalbow	Shelter
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Officers
Rose Chadwick	Housing Corporation
Peter Shadbolt	Housing Advisory Group
Martin Reid	East Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Barbara Compton	Cities in the South East
Carolyn Antill	West Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Chris Woolf	GOSE
Jennifer Shaw	South East Rural Community Councils
Nigel Preston	Strategic Housing Officers Group
Lynne Standing	West Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Meurig Lloyd	NFLR
Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
John Littlemore	Kent Housing Group
Cath Stubbings	Regional Assembly
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Sarah Hollamby	Berkshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Graham Ashworth	Housing Advisory Group
David January	Surrey Chief Housing Officers Group
Caroline Tindall	Ashworth & St. Peter's Hospital NHS Trust
Paul Staines	Oxfordshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation

Apologies:

Martin Tugwell	Regional Assembly
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Julie Nicholas	South East Learning & Skills Council
Pete Errington	The House Builders Federation
Karen MacDonald	National Housing Federation
Jo Nurse	South East Public Health Group
Mel Shad	National Housing Federation
Kathryn Shephard	RAISE
Mike Stimpson	Private Landlords Association
Neil Fuller	East Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Diana Bernhardt	Supporting People South East Implementation Group

I. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

I.1 Sharon Smith opened the meeting and welcomed the Group.

2. Minutes of the Meeting – 7 August 2006

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as read.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Election of Chairman

4.1 Cath Stubbings explained that the Assembly had received one nomination in advance of the meeting for Sharon Smith to continue as Chair. She invited further nominations from the Group.

4.2 There were no further nominations and Sharon said that she was happy to take the Chair but for the Group to be aware that, as stated in the Terms of Reference, this was now on a two year cycle.

4.3 Sharon Smith was duly elected as Chair.

5. Terms of Reference

5.1 The Chair stated that the draft Forum Terms of Reference had been developed to reflect the changes in the Forum's role following transfer of the Regional Housing Board to the Assembly and had been circulated to the Group prior to the meeting alongside the Housing Advisory Group Terms of Reference. She pointed out the key differences between the TORs and the roles of the two groups, drawing particular attention to the fact that the Forum will continue to elect its own Chair and a Vice Chair will not be elected.

5.2 The Forum agreed to adopt the draft Terms of Reference.

5.3 The Chair offered thanks to Karen Stalbow, as out-going Vice Chair for all her support and input into the Group over the last year.

6. Future Forum activities and work programme

6.1 The Chair explained that a written report was going to the Board on 6 October on the work the Forum had covered. There was still some work ongoing on ex offenders and overcrowding.

Initial feedback received from the Housing Advisory Group indicated that they were very impressed with the scale and range of the work covered. There will be feedback following the Board meeting on 6 October.

- 6.2 As yet there is no work plan for next year but the main focus will be on the Regional Housing Strategy. Cath Stubbings explained the timetable of work on the RHS going to the Board for approval.
- Now until end of year – period reviewing research
 - 3 November Joint Meeting HAG/RHF/AHTG
 - Looking at possibility of setting another Regional Housing Board meeting mid January
 - Consultation period on changes runs to 22 January
 - Consultation process - Workshops at CIH Conference 14 March, sandwiched between two sets of three consultation events around region.
 - April/May analysing consultation feedback for Board meeting on 14 May.
 - Submit strategy recommendations before end of June.
- 6.3 It was noted that consultation events should be scheduled to avoid clashing with sub-regional events relating to the South East Plan. There was some discussion around the Comprehensive Spending Review. It was felt that the RHS needed to be seen in relation to other papers coming out such as Local Government White Paper. It was also felt that the South East Plan might have implications for the RHS.
- 6.4 Rose Chadwick referred the Group for information to a paper on the Corporation website titled: 'Future of Investment'.
- 6.5 The point was raised that due of the uncertainty around the potential changes that could arise from various national and regional reviews being carried out, there is a need for flexibility around the frequency of meetings. The Chair stated that future meetings are intended to be quarterly and half way between each Board meeting. It was accepted that additional meetings could be held if needed, to respond to future developments.
- 6.6 Brian Horton questioned why there was no representation from the Board at the meeting. He pointed out the increasing importance of direct dialogue with the Board. The Chair stated that it was written in the new Terms of Reference 3.3 page – representation of Regional Housing Board Organisations.
- 6.7 Cath Stubbings explained that there is a clear direct relationship between the Regional Housing Board and the Advisory Groups, but it is not an exclusive relationship. The Forum is part of the organisations influencing it, and it is important to bear in mind that fine tuning of arrangements following the recent transfer is still in progress. She stated that Martin Tugwell is not a member of the Board and suggested that the most appropriate way to have input into the Board is through material from meetings copied to senior officials from Board partners.

- 6.8 David January reminded the meeting that the Chair of the Regional Housing Board, Elizabeth Cartwright, attended the previous Forum meeting and had expressed how important the work of the Forum was to her and the Board.
- 6.9 Brian Horton expressed concerns about simply being advisory as this was far too divorced from decision making. This view was supported by other members of the Group. It was suggested that the Group needs a Communication Strategy.

Action: It was agreed to invite Heather Bolton to discuss communication with the Forum at the meeting on 5 February.

7. Report of Overcrowding Sub-group

7.1 Michael Veryard presented the report of the Overcrowding sub-group. He explained to the Group that this is an interim document intended to support the oncoming review of the Regional Housing Strategy and is intended to be finalised at the end of February. There is a wide range of membership which is listed on page 29. The Group had looked at the national and regional position and agreed key themes which have then been assigned to different members of the sub-group. All members have actively contributed.

7.2 The report highlights issues around:

- Current DCLG Statutory definition – room sizes and standards
- Links to dampness, health, education – Shelter’s ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda
- Right to Buy sales
- Housing Corporation bids resulting in smaller accommodation being built
- BME issues
- Rural overcrowding/migrant agriculture
- Private sector
- Under occupation

7.3 Further work of the sub-group will be to start informing the Regional Housing Board as previous RHS did not pick up on overcrowding.

7.4 The Chair thanked Michael for the presentation.

7.5 Graham Ashworth referred to Recommendation 2 – that a target be set to provide different types of dwellings. He made the point that findings about what needs to be developed would need to be used to inform planning policy.

7.6 It was suggested that the sub-group look at shared ownership for larger units and value for money considerations and consider focusing on better use of existing stock, size and standards for new provision and under-occupation/ downsizing.

- 7.7 The Chair stated that the Assembly has just commissioned a piece of research on type and size. Cath Stubbings stated that the findings would be available at the end of November and the sub-group would have access to the research alongside the Forum. The research would focus on the future not existing stock. She informed the Group that Cambridge University had recently done a piece of work on existing type and size and this report would be ready in around 2 to 3 weeks.

Action: This report and the brief for the size and type research to be made available to the Forum.

- 7.8 The Chair asked what would be the deadline for the Board to consider this work. Cath Stubbings explained that something would be needed by Christmas. The Project team would need to consider how to take this forward.

Action: The Chair of the sub-group to present interim report to a future Project Team meeting.

8. Private Sector Renewal

- 8.1 Chris Woolf stated he had attended an energy efficiency event in Woking arranged by SEEDA. GOSE had prepared a paper that looked at information on Private Sector Renewal from statistics supplied by 22 local authorities and information on planned use of money.
- 8.2 He asked the Group whether the paper reflected an accurate picture. In response to a question on how many loans are being done, he stated that this is a slow process.
- 8.3 Barbara Compton made the point that if Councils are spending in excess of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation it should be flagged up to the Board, as this was unsustainable in the long term.
- 8.4 Chris Woolf highlighted some issues raised at the event at Woking:
- Value of stock survey
 - Value of regional information
 - Delivery issues
 - Single assessment
 - Issue of understanding what's going on
 - Health and Safety issues
 - Raising profile – whether Board needs to be more involved
 - Questions on funding
 - Importance of having clear links housing/education
 - Loans agenda

8.5 The Chair informed the Group that there would be a workshop on Private Sector Renewal at the Board Review Day on 6 October.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Next meeting will be a joint meeting of HAG/RHF/AHTG on 3 November in Reading.

9.2 At the last meeting there was a discussion around Disabled Facilities Grants. Chris Woolf stated that GOSE is working with Local Authorities on these and they are likely to go out in the next day or two.

9.3 Brian Horton requested that the latest RHB Members list be appended to the minutes of the meeting.

Action: The latest RHB Members list to be appended to the minutes.

9.4 David January informed the Group he would be standing down as he was no longer the Chair of Surrey Chief Housing Officers Group. Kevin Hetherington from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council will be replacing him.

9.5 The Chair expressed her thanks to David and thanked him for his input to the Group.

The meeting closed at 3:45 pm

Appendix

REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD MEMBERS

Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright	Chairman of the Board and member of the Assembly.
Cllr Don Turner	Brighton and Hove City Council and member of the Assembly.
Cllr John Goddard	Oxford City Council and member of the Assembly.
Ann Santry	Social Housing and member of the Assembly.
Douglas Horner	CBI and member of the Assembly.
Sheila Drew Smith	Housing Corporation
Cllr Keith House	SEEDA
Trevor Beattie	English Partnerships
Darren Richards	GOSE
Ian Coates	GOSE