

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2008

Present:

Andrea Cannon	SERIG
Arlene Kersley	Rural Community Council for Berkshire
Barbara Compton	Cities in the South East
Carl Petrokofsky	Department of Health
Caroline Tindall	Ashford & St. Peters Trust
Carolyn Antill	West Sussex Local Authorities
Cath Stubbings	Regional Assembly
Clare Skidmore	Department of Health
Graham Ashworth	New Forest District Council
Ian Walker	Housing Advisory Group Representative
Kevin Hetherington	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Sharon Smith	CIH SE Regional Committee – Chairperson
Tina Morris	Regional Assembly

I. Apologies for absence and declarations of substitutes:

Apologies for absence were received from:

Alison Bailey	Regional Assembly
Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
Karen MacDonald	SE National Housing Federation Development Forum
Karen Stalbow	Shelter
Kate Dallip	South East England Development Agency
Kathryn Williamson	Regional Action and Involvement South East
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation
Martin Tugwell	Regional Assembly
Melanie Brain	Berkshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Enabler Steering Group
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Warren Finney	National Housing Federation

The following substitutions were declared:

Steve Kethero for Chris Woolf, Government Office for the South East.
Sarah Davis for Michelle Chivunga, Chartered Institute of Housing.
Pat Taylor for Neil Fuller, East Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group.

2. **Welcome and introductions**

- 2.1 The Group were introduced to Clare Skidmore a representative of the Care Services Improvement Partnership, Department of Health who has become a new member.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2008 were agreed subject to the amendment that they record the attendance of Carolyn Antill.

- 3.2 Item 3.10: Michelle Chivunga has sent the research to Catherine Stubbings who is in the process of reviewing it.

- 3.3 Item 4.3: Ian Fitzgerald has forwarded information which Catherine Stubbings has shared with the task group.

➤ **Action:** Tina Morris to forward the information to all members not involved in the task group.

- 3.4 Item 5.1: Catherine Stubbings will check that this has been completed. The Group were informed that since the last meeting Andrea Smith from Radian has presented to the RHB. The presentation summarised the current market pressures and challenges however it was acknowledged that the picture is ever changing and that comments from the Group were welcome.

- 3.5 Item 7.3: It was communicated to the Group that David January has been commissioned to assist in the development of the RHB's submission to the review and response to the consultation on proposals for reform of the HRA subsidy system. David has made connections with the CIH, LGA and a number of LA's direct to develop his advice.

- 3.6 Item 3.12, 4.5 and 7.2: The Group agreed that these action points had been completed.

4. **Housing the ageing population**

Discussion of regional demographic analysis

- 4.1 The Group were introduced to the paper and asked to indicate whether this is a useful addition to existing LA based sources of evidence and data analysis? Does the picture provided by the demographic analysis reflect the local work and evidence?

➤ **Action:** Forum members are to circulate the paper through their local networks with the aim of receiving feedback to the questions asked of the Forum.

- 4.2 With the report suggesting an expansion of the ageing population the discussion focussed on the issue of whether LA's should be concentrating on providing for the growing needs of the ageing population or on the unmet

current local need of family homes. It was suggested that there is an imbalance in the social structure in the areas that are deemed to be attractive to the ageing population. Within these areas agencies such as the Social and Community Services are now becoming more interested and pushing the extra care housing agenda. It was highlighted however that this need not be an either / or situation and schemes which seek to release larger homes which are under-occupied can provide the balance.

4.3 Carl Petrokosfky informed the Group that he is managing a project looking at how well Joint Strategic Needs Assessments reflect the full range of evidence of housing and support needs to inform LAA targets and service planning. Initial evidence suggests that housing needs have not been picked up very strongly, implying a need for a development programme.

4.4 The Group discussed the natural meeting point of family housing and older peoples housing. Feedback from LA housing strategy events is that three generations under one roof is another option that is not always explored. Rural Housing Needs Surveys question respondents on their three generation needs and it is reported that increasingly families wish to stay together. It was expressed, however, that multi-generational tenancy agreements need to be approached with care as there is a need to safeguard all concerned.

➤ **Action:** Releasing Larger Homes Task Group to add to their task list the job of investigating how RSL's protect tenants in three generation homes.

➤ **Action:** Arlene Kersley to send to Catherine Stubbings a sample of the Rural Housing Needs Survey.

4.5 It was stressed that the strategic alliance between housing policies and social care agendas is critical to meeting needs and creating an economically sustainable model. The Group were drawn to the issue of older people's villages and the polar views as to their success.

➤ **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to contact Anchor Trust regarding Denham Garden Village and report back to the Group on issues such as affordability, relationship with the surrounding community and accessibility.

4.6 The Group were reminded that focus should also be on the open market and those older people with equity in their existing homes. The question was asked as to what the product would be for the emerging older home owner. Developers are being encouraged by members to look at what people want rather than the format that they are used to.

Update from task groups

4.7 The Group were informed that both task and finish groups are on target to complete the project and present draft reports in early 2009 to the Forum and then to the RHB in May 2009.

- 4.8 A questionnaire will be sent out to all LA's and HA's in the region at the end of October 2008 to help identify the tenant incentive schemes for releasing larger homes. The aim is to identify to what extent incentive schemes are successful at the moment, and where they exist?
- 4.9 The older people's needs task group is linked into the work on JSNA and has the opportunity to look at the wider market in terms of housing and planning. Claire Skidmore has joined the Group and will be responding to the discussion of the Forum on the definitions of extra care needs¹.

5. Rural affordable housing – bids for new schemes

- 5.1 The HC at the RHB² asked about the possible reasons for the current decrease in the number of rural schemes, which were not part of market housing and therefore not usually affected by a downturn in the market. The question was put to the Forum for comment.
- 5.2 Arlene Kersley explained that Berkshire is in the early stages of pulling plans forward and suggested that it was the planning LDF process itself that was slowing their progression as Parishes are waiting for finalised housing allocations.
- **Action:** Arlene Kersley to get feedback from regional networks to Catherine Stubbings to report to RHB.
- 5.3 It was explained that the proposal for community led schemes on exception sites in the Mathew Taylor Report has been positively received. Furthermore the withdrawal of funding from DEFRA for rural housing enablers has not affected the region as a whole with the exception of Oxfordshire.

6. Gypsies and Traveller RSL financial toolkit

- 6.1 The Group agreed that due to the underrepresentation at the meeting of RSL members this item will be dealt with by email or, if necessary, brought forward to the next meeting.
- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to email RSL Group members regarding comments on the paper and to report the way forward at the next meeting.

7. Any Other Business

Work programme of RHF / Current housing market climate

¹ Paragraph 3.11, page 3 of Regional Housing Forum meeting of 7th July 2008.

² Paragraph 7.21, page 8 of Regional Housing Board meeting of 3rd September 2008.

- 7.1 Sharon Smith explained that the RHB project team will be looking at the work streams of the RHF. The Group were asked for potential topic headings to feed into the project team's discussions.
- 7.2 The Group were keen to have a substantive discussion on the current market pressures to enable them to feed into any messages that the RHB should be sending out.
- **Action:** Regional Assembly to organise a workshop to provide the Forum with an opportunity to feed into the messages of the Board.
- 7.3 The Group were keen to re-establish the links with the Homelessness Forum.
- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to invite the Homelessness Forum to provide an update at the next meeting.
- 7.4 Discussions moved to the RSL perspective and the percentage increase in repossessions of shared ownership properties. The HC explained that they are currently monitoring RSL positions on the high cost of borrowing and the implications on their future capacity. They are currently looking at intermediate renting as an option to fill low cost home ownership voids.
- 7.5 The Group were updated on HC work with CLG on the housing market: announcements for the criteria for the mortgage rescue schemes are due in November 2008; demand for the Homebuyer Direct scheme is outstripping supply; greater flexibility of grant rates is under discussion; £400m to deliver more social houses over the next 18 months by bringing funding forward.
- 8. Date of next meeting: January 2009 - tbc**

The meeting closed at 3:30 p.m.