

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2008

Present:

Sharon Smith	CIH SE Regional Committee – Chair
Alison Bailey	Regional Assembly
Andrea Cannon	SERIG
Arlene Kersley	Community Council for Berkshire
Barbara Compton	Cities in the South East
Caroline Tindall	NHS Key Workers
Graham Ashworth	Housing Advisory Group Representative
Helen Burton	West Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group
Jacky Guddoy	Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames
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
Kevin Hetherington	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Mathew Bush	National Housing Federation – SE
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Enabler Steering Group
Michelle Chivunga	Chartered Institute of Housing
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Pete Errington	The Home Builders Federation
Steve Kethero	Government Office South East
Tina Morris	Regional Assembly
Vicky Adams	Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames

I. Apologies for absence and declarations of substitutes:

Apologies for absence were received from:

Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
Cath Stubbings	Regional Assembly
Glenn Austin	Government Office South East
Ian Walker	Housing Advisory Group Representative
Karen MacDonald	SE National Housing Federation Development Forum
Lynne Croker	Hampshire Strategic Housing Officers Group
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation
Rutuja Kulkarni	SE Public Health Group

Meurig Lloyd of the National Federation of Landlords has changed roles and will no longer take part in the Forum.

The following substitutions were declared:

Andrew Palmer for Neil Fuller, East Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group

Lawrence Dey has taken over the role of John Littlemore, Kent Housing Group

Post meeting note:

Ruth Kerslake will replace Meurig Lloyd from the National Federation of Landlords as a member of the Forum.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January were agreed subject to the following amendment:

Item 3.10 should be amended to John Littlemore of Maidstone District Council.

2.2 Item 3.4: Publication of the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) was delayed to the 4th April and therefore unavailable for the CIH conference.

➤ **Action:** All those who have not received the publication in the next week to contact Tina Morris for a copy.

2.3 Item 3.12: Sharon Smith delivered the advice of the Forum to the Regional Housing Board (RHB), which shared their concerns on the funding for rural housing enablers. The Board will be in correspondence with Communities and Local Government (CLG). It has also responded to the Taylor Review.

2.4 Item 4.2: Steve Kethero reported that the rules on grants for Gypsy and Traveller site refurbishments do not permit them to be extended to the private sector. The rules are not due to be reviewed.

2.5 Item: 5.4: Andrea Cannon commented that the draft letter has progressed and that the SERIG have received contributions from the majority of the local authorities.

➤ **Action:** Andrea Cannon will liaise with Cath Stubbings regarding the draft letter.

3. Breathing Spaces

3.1 Jacky Guddoy gave a presentation on the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames 'Breathing Spaces' initiative.

3.2 The question was raised as to who are the parties to the private lease. It was explained that the Council and the private landlord are the parties and the tenant forms a separate non-secure tenancy agreement with the Council.

3.3 With regard to the leasing of the property the Forum asked about the level of attachment a tenant may have to the property and how the initiative intends to deal with it at the end of their program. In reply it was explained

that further negotiations may be made between the landlord and tenant and for these parties to take on an agreement between themselves.

3.4 Responding to the question of whether tenants will be able to move out of the private sector housing into a council residence before the end of their tenancy agreement, it was stated that this would be a possibility. As the lease agreement is with the Council the landlord would not be in a disadvantaged position because of this. The issue for the Council would be to find alternative tenants as they would still be liable for the rental payment.

3.5 It was unclear to the Forum whether there are rent review mechanisms within the leasing agreements between the landlord and Council. It was explained that these existed between the Council and the tenant.

3.6 Referring to the uncertainty and rental increase the tenants now face within the initiative, the Forum requested clarification regarding the level of financial and other professional advice given to the tenants before they agree to the initiative. Vicky Adams assured the Forum that they refer them to the Citizens Advice Bureau and advise them of the potential risks. The initiative has a system in place which identifies those with good rent payment records and discusses affordability issues with them.

➤ **Note:** All those who require further information on the Breathing Spaces initiative are to contact Tina Morris for Jacky Guddoy's contact details.

➤ **Action:** Tina Morris is to send a copy of the presentation to members with the meeting minutes.

4. NAHP and Regular Market Engagement

4.1 Paul Abey (HC) gave a presentation on NAHP and Regular Market Engagement.

4.2 The Forum expressed some concern over aspects of Regular Market Engagement (RME). The question was asked as to how members are meant to be able to equate homes specifically for BME groups with choice based lettings. In response Paul Abey felt that this was something that needed to be tackled at a local level to identify the most appropriate means of addressing need. He further commented that there was little evidence from providers that the needs of BME groups were being identified.

4.3 Concerns were expressed about the impact of current uncertainties in the housing market. In response it was stated that market conditions could adversely affect new starts on site but could also provide opportunities for RSLs to acquire additional stock and land made available by housebuilders. The additional pressures on grant per unit due to targets for larger homes and higher standards were acknowledged.

4.4 With regard to data which showed the grant per unit on s.106 and non-s.106 developments the members noted with interest that there was little difference in the percentages. The HC felt that more efficiency work needs to

be done in order to bring down grant rates for s.106 developments and that there is a need to increase discussions before schemes go to the bids rounds. The HC are working towards this to increase understanding of what the grant under s.106 will be providing,

- 4.5 The Forum discussed the impact of reverse cascade mechanisms associated with s.106. It was pointed out that it is dependant on the way in which the cascade agreement is written, and the HC have provided guidance.
- **Note:** The following link to Cascades: improving certainty in the delivery of affordable housing for large-scale development?
<http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/publications.htm#CascadesReport>
- 4.6 With such reliance on s.106 identified it was questioned how this will fit with the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 4.7 The Forum also raised the prioritisation of supported housing for vulnerable people as this does not appear within the RME list. The HC assured members that it remains a priority within the RHS and the list presented by the HC highlights areas which need to be addressed in addition to those areas already identified.
- 4.8 The Forum was informed that the RHB has had a number of discussions regarding their recommendations to the CLG on the rural settlements allocation. Their approach traditionally is to focus on settlements of <3k. The question was put forward as to why the allocations for settlements of 3k to 10k were so low? The HC advised that this stems from the fact that there are a relatively small amount of settlements that are in this category.

5. Barriers to delivery: Alison Bailey

- 5.1 The Forum was informed that the Regional Assembly, GOSE, English Partnerships (EP) and SEEDA met to discuss the various strands of work set in train by RHB and how they were coming together.
- 5.2 Regarding the programme the Forum still has the opportunity to shape and influence.
- **Note:** Any further ideas on solutions for the barriers to delivery programme to be sent to Catherine Stubbings.
- 5.3 Karen Stalbow updated the Forum on work on barriers being undertaken by Shelter.
- **Action:** Karen Stalbow to discuss Shelter's work on barriers to affordable housing delivery and how this might be used by RHB.
- 5.4 The Forum discussed the need to involve elected members as part of the process of tackling barriers to affordable housing delivery. SEEDA explained that they are keen to widen the scope of their work to involve elected

members. Workshops are being planned for the autumn. Furthermore SEEDA have produced a report that highlighted the skills gaps and barriers.

- **Note:** The following link to: Making Places: Working together for effective delivery, Final report June 2007
<http://www.southeastexcellence.co.uk/documents/SEEDA%20final%20report%202022-06-07.pdf>

- 5.5 The Forum expressed concern over the possible duplication and dilution of work. It was assured that the RHB is aiming to bring all the strands together and eliminate the gaps in the various initiatives. The thinking is that the sum of the component parts would be greater than the individual strands. The Board, however, are not necessarily looking to take the lead; in some cases it will encourage other stakeholders to do so
- 5.6 SEEDA stated that they are in the process of agreeing with around 15 organisations a Memorandum of Understanding about direct delivery and policies, to avoid the duplication of work.

6. RHS Update: Alison Bailey

- 6.1 The RHS covers the funding for the period 2008/11. Funding for 2008/09 has been agreed and there will be further submissions to CLG later in the year. These will include Regional Infrastructure Fund and Brownfield Land Assembly Company (BLAC).
- 6.2 The regional rural target is still to be confirmed. RHB recommended that targets should be increased from 2006-08 levels.
- 6.3 The action plan within the RHS is the basis for the work program for the Forum. The emphasis for the forthcoming year is on the implications of the ageing population and sustainability.
 - **Action:** Catherine Stubbings will bring to the next Forum meeting the findings on the research programme Future Care Needs and Costs and the presentation from the Department of Health Home Share Pilots.
- 6.4 On the issue of sustainability the RHB has been asked by the Assembly Select Committee on Climate Change to bring forward work on retrofitting existing buildings. This will be discussed at the Board's next meeting in May.

7. Affordable Housing Task Group (AHTG) and South East Homelessness Forum (SEHF) Update

- 7.1 The minutes of the AHTG meeting will be circulated to all members.
 - **Action:** Tina Morris to circulate the minutes of the ATHG meeting.

7.2 The Forum welcomed the homelessness data circulated by Glenn Austin. The Chair asked that any comments from the Forum regarding the update from SEHF be reported to Glenn Austin.

- **Note:** All members to contact Tina Morris to pass on comments regarding the SEHF update.

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 **Sub national Review (SNR):** It was explained that the Regional Assembly's Advisory Groups would not be submitting their own responses to SNR. Any thoughts or comments should be emailed to the Chair who will ensure that they are fed in to the Regional Assembly and RHB discussions on SNR.

- **Action:** All members to email Sharon Smith with any comments on SNR.

8.2 The Forum was informed that the Regional Monitoring Report (RMR) will be published shortly by the Regional Assembly.

- **Action:** Tina Morris to find out if Forum members will be sent the RMR.

- **Note:** The report will be available from the Assembly website:
<http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/>

9. **Date of next meeting: 7 July 2008 at 2.00pm**

The meeting closed at 4:00 p.m.