

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2008

Present:

Sharon Smith	CIH SE Regional Committee – Chairperson
Andrea Cannon	SERIG
Angela Catley	NAAPS
Arlene Kersley	Rural Community Council for Berkshire
Carl Petrokofsky	Department of Health
Cath Stubbings	Regional Assembly
Dawn Blake	Homeshare – West Sussex
Elizabeth Cartwright	RHB Chairman
Melanie Brain	Berkshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Michelle Chivunga	Chartered Institute of Housing
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Steve Kethero	Government Office South East
Tina Morris	Regional Assembly
Warren Finney	National Housing Federation

I. Apologies for absence and declarations of substitutes:

Apologies for absence were received from:

Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
Caroline Tindall	Ashford & St. Peters Trust
Chris Woolf	GOSE
Claire Hamilton	Regional Assembly
Ian Walker	Housing Advisory Group Representative
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
Lynne Croker	Hampshire Strategic Housing Officers Group
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation
Martin Tugwell	Regional Assembly
Mathew Bush	National Housing Federation - SE
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Enabler Steering Group
Pete Errington	The Home Builders Federation

The following substitutions were declared:

Ian Fitzpatrick for Neil Fuller, East Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group
Paul Juan for Barbara Compton, Cities in the South East

Post meeting note:

Carl Petrokofsky will replace Rutuja Kulkarni from the SE Public Health Group as a member of the Forum. Melanie Brain will replace Sarah Hollamby from Berkshire Chief Housing Officers Group as a member of the Forum.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2008 were agreed as accurate.
- 2.2 Item 2.5: This is an ongoing item, they are currently waiting for final confirmation that all of the funding is in place.
- 2.3 Item 5.3: Karen Stalbow, Catherine Stubbings and Warren Finney have met with regard to the barriers work and will be feeding back the outcome in the course of the meeting.

3 Aging Populations

Homeshare Pilot Presentation

- 3.1 Angela Catley and Dawn Blake gave a presentation on the Homeshare Project.
- 3.2 The Forum raised questions regarding the legalities and practicalities of the scheme and in the light of rising utility costs whether these were considered within the agreements. Dawn Blake explained that in the negotiations a legal agreement will be drawn up to the specifications of the parties and such issues will then be raised. Legal advice has been taken with regard to the wording of the Homeshare agreement and for the sharer it incorporates a licence to occupy.
- 3.3 Responding to a question regarding the flexibility of the model, it was explained that there is scope to tailor it to incorporate rent payments. However it was felt that consideration in the form of the provision of care might step into the realms of employee and employer relationships.
- 3.4 Dawn Blake informed the Forum that there will be a national event towards the end of 2009 which will be aimed at directors of adult services. It is believed that at such a time there would be some meaningful statistics and review of the pilot schemes.
- 3.5 The Forum asked whether there were any fees in relation to the registration to the scheme. At present it is under review; a fee would engage people's commitment to the scheme, yet how this will work in practice needs further exploration.
- 3.6 With regards to the relationships of the participants within the scheme the Forum asked how far this extends once matches have been agreed. It was

explained that support of the parties is as extensive as they require, third parties (i.e. social landlords) are also encouraged to support the relationship.

- 3.7 The Forum was asked to consider the Homeshare scheme in light of the principles of the national strategy on Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods as an illustration of how these might be achieved. Members were encouraged to speak to their local partners to see if such a scheme is possible in their local area when there is a large scale roll out. Certainly the Forum expressed the merits of the scheme and in the wider topic of the ageing population the dissemination of this as an option was welcomed.

Regional Assembly Policy Team Research on Aging and Care

- 3.8 The Forum's attention was drawn to point 3.3 of agenda item 4b and asked for their comments and view of the current status of the provision of affordable housing for care workers. The following points were highlighted:

3.8.1 It is their experience that there is a high turnover of essential workers and there is a need to look at the requirements with regard to the long-term and short-term view.

3.8.2 The definition of essential workers is subject to what the local authorities deem it to be; therefore any such answers concerning essential workers will vary.

- 3.9 On point 3.4 the Forum advised that currently there is an inconsistent approach from district to district. There was concern however that a new approach to monitoring could be burdensome and the best practice would be to pull together the existing monitoring. Forthcoming guidance from Foundations, the national co-ordinating body for home improvement agencies, was highlighted as potentially relevant to consistency of service.

- 3.10 With regard to point 3.5 the Forum expressed that some research is justified on the basis of ascertaining; what is the best use of lifetime homes? How can the standard be best used in terms of design? Who are the targeted end users of lifetime homes? Certainly the issues arising relate also to the sizable existing housing stock and emerging double standards applied to the public and private sectors.

➤ **Action:** Michelle Chivunga will send to the group any research by the Chartered Institute of Housing on retro-fitting existing stock that she thinks is relevant.

- 3.11 Item 3.6 led the Forum to discuss the difficulties in determining a consistent definition of extra care needs between local authorities. However a one size fits all approach might not meet the needs of the local authorities: if it is accepted that extra care needs has a flexible badge then perhaps there is little need to define it.

- 3.12 The reaction from the Forum with regard to the ability of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Item 3.7) to identify the specific needs of vulnerable groups was that it is very limited. They argued that a desk top

exercise would not pick out such small groups and therefore something additional is required. It was noted that some LA's have commissioned their own additional research / surveys to fill this information gap.

- **Action:** Tina Morris to circulate the final consultants' report when available.

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods Briefing

- 3.13 The scope for the Forum to get involved to advise on the national strategy was encompassed within section 7. The aim is to collectively improve delivery for older people within the region and influence the way in which the national strategy is implemented.
- 3.14 The Forum was asked whether the removal of ring-fencing for DFG funding is harmful or not? The removal was seen as generally helpful, as there is a need to be more flexible if all the issues are to be solved surrounding the use of stock and maximising the effectiveness of grants made available. The concern with the current system is that people are put through a certain formula and head towards a predetermined outcome.

4 Regional Housing Forum Work Programme

- 4.1 The Forum was invited to set up two task and finish sub-groups. (1) To identify and assess the effectiveness of existing approaches to gathering evidence of the housing needs of the ageing population and review existing data and research; and (2) investigate the feasibility of making more effective use of under-occupied social rented housing.
- 4.2 Within the remit of subgroup (1) there is a need to assess the quality of what comes out of SHMA's and the cross connection with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. Together with the Assembly's Care Report these can be used to draw some conclusions on whether there is something missing or whether the information can be used more effectively in a different way.
- 4.3 Feeding also into the mix is some analysis of the Sub National Population Projections, with an eye on the where the greatest pressures in the region will be in terms of costs for housing and support care for the ageing population. The Forum was asked if there was scope at the next meeting to present some more detailed analysis from those projections in relation to the aging population and to look at it in conjunction with the work carried out by individual authorities.
- **Action:** Ian Fitzpatrick to share with the group any relevant work undertaken on demographics.
 - **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to continue thread of conversation on demographic work already carried out by local authorities and widen it out via email.

- 4.4 Discussions within the Forum on the work to be completed by subgroup (2) indicated that the Overcrowding Sub-Group of the Forum have completed some work on under occupation, and the merits gained by encouraging older people to release larger family homes. Initial thoughts were that with the financial constraints on local authorities meant that there are few ways to incentivise people to move.
- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to go back to the draft report of the Forums sub group on overcrowding to provide a starting point for the new sub group on the under occupation issues.
- 4.5 The Forum discussed the rest of the work programme.
- **Action:** Warren Finney to share with the group any relevant work completed regarding the sustainable development issues relating to taxation, funding and whole life cycle costs.
- 4.6 The Forum was asked for volunteers for the two subgroups.
- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to extend invitation to those who have sent their apologies and confirm a full picture when available.
 - **Action:** All to those interested in volunteering for the groups to contact Catherine Stubbings.

5 Regional Housing Board

- 5.1 The key issue of item 2.5, covering the current market pressures, was highlighted to the Forum. They were asked for their views on the current situation and whether the right actions are being taken and if these are going to have the right sorts of effect?
- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to send the question out to the whole group for comments.

6 Barriers Update

- 6.1 The Forum was updated on the barriers for affordable housing delivery within the work programme discussions.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 First Time Buyers Initiative: The Forum was asked take on the task of monitoring the progress of the scheme from the AHTG and liaise with English Partnerships.
- 7.2 Winter Warmth: The issue of fuel poverty and more generally winter warmth was raised within the group. Through the RHB Project Team it was

suggested that the question be posed as to how the Board might be able to take a fresh look at the issues involved. The topic of pre-paid accounts was highlighted to the Forum as an issue to lobby on for equal rates.

- **Action:** Warren Finney to ask the appropriate group to send to Tina Morris, who will then share with the group, any relevant work and information on the topic of fuel poverty and the effect of pre-paid systems.

7.3 Regional Funding Allocation: The Forum was asked for their comments on the approach taken by other local authorities towards the campaign championed by David January of Waverley Borough Council.

- **Action:** Catherine Stubbings to send the question out to the whole group for comments.

7.4 Forum Chairperson: According to the Forum's terms of reference there is a provision for a two yearly review of the Chair. Given the current uncertainties surrounding SNR it was suggested that this is not the best time to disrupt the work program. The Forum **AGREED** that Sharon Smith will continue with her commitment to chair the group for the next twelve months and then review the position again in October 2009.

8 Date of next meeting: 6 October 2008 at 2:00pm

The meeting closed at 4:00 p.m.