

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 7 August 2006

Present:

Sharon Smith (Chair)	CIH SE Regional Committee
Karen Stalbow (Vice-Chair)	Shelter
Barbara Compton	Cities in the South East
Caroline Tindall	NHS Keyworkers
Carolyn Antill	West Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Cath Stubbings	Regional Assembly
Chris Woolf	GOSE
Claire Martin	SE Regional Implementation Group - Supporting People
Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright	Chairman, Regional Housing Board
David January	Surrey Chief Housing Officers Association
Graham Ashworth	Housing Advisory Group
Julie Dagless	Regional Assembly
Karen MacDonald	National Housing Federation - SE Development Forum
Kate Dallip	SEEDA
Kathryn Shephard	RAISE
Laurie Priebe	East Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Lawrence Day	Kent Housing Group
Lynne Standing	West Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group
Mark Powell	Kent Probation Service
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Officers
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Nigel Preston	Strategic Housing Officers Group
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Peter Shadbolt	Housing Advisory Group

Apologies:

Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
Dave Simmons	BME (GOSE)
Diana Bernhardt	Supporting People
Jennifer Shaw	South East Rural Community Councils
Jo Nurse	South East Public Health Group
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation
Martin Tugwell	Regional Assembly
Neil Fuller	East Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Paul Staines	Oxfordshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Pete Errington	The Home Builders Federation
Sarah Hollamby	Berkshire Chief Housing Officers Group
Warren Finney	National Housing Federation

I. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Sharon Smith opened the meeting and welcomed the Group. Sharon welcomed Graham Ashworth and Peter Shadbolt who are joining the Forum

as representatives from the Assembly's Housing Advisory Group. Sharon also welcomed Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright, Chairman of the Regional Housing Board, as an observer of the meeting and thanked her for coming.

2. Minutes of the Meeting - 5 June 2006

Barbara Compton requested a correction be made to her representation. This was agreed.

Sharon Smith advised that queries raised following the distribution of the previous meeting's minutes had been followed up and were reflected in proposed amendments now tabled.

Barbara Compton suggested that in the case of the consultation on the supported housing framework the summary of responses, comments and recommendations be presented to the Forum for sign-off. Sharon Smith advised that the Forum does not have the authority for this. It was agreed that the Forum receive the final version of the framework and make comments for the Regional Housing Board to consider if it still has concerns about aspects of the framework at this time.

The minutes, including tabled amendments, were otherwise agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Assembly Review of Advisory Groups

Cath Stubbings briefed the Group on the aims of the advisory group review and summarised the Assembly's position. The review has reinforced the view that the roles of the different advisory groups are subject to change and that there is a need for a series of complementary groups to offer consistent and comprehensive advice on housing and planning. To a large extent the review has now been completed. There will now be a period of re-focussing the groups on implementation and delivery. The Regional Housing Board (RHB) for example will be looking at different ways to communicate with the Housing Advisory Group and Regional Planning Committee. The Terms of Reference for the Affordable Housing Task Group are currently being looked at and it was announced Barbara Compton had been asked to chair this group.

The final task in the review is to update the Terms of Reference for the RHF to reflect its role to advise the RHB on delivery and implementation issues. The key elements of the role are envisaged as updating and supporting on

housing strategies; future development of strategies; continuing link for RHB partners in general and bringing issues to the Forum for opinion and advice.

Cath requested that Forum members let her have any comments on updating the Terms of Reference which would be considered at the next meeting.

Action: All

Sharon Smith thanked Cath for the update. There were no questions on this item.

Graham Ashworth suggested members might want to consider the Housing Advisory Group's Terms of Reference. The Group agreed.

Action: HAG's and RHF's Terms of Reference to be circulated

Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright thanked the Chair for inviting her to the meeting and explained the Forum provides an important input into the RHB. She continued that the RHB values and welcomes the Forum's contributions. The Board looks forward to the Forum's support in achieving effective consultation on updating the Regional Housing Strategy.

5. Accommodation Needs of Young Ex-Offenders RHF Sub-Group

Mark Powell provided the following background information on Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). These were formed in response to new responsibilities introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, funded by the Youth Justice Board, and consist of multi-agency teams; representatives by social services, health and education, police and probation officers; but are not required to include a representative from housing. The two key aims of YOTs are to reduce re-offending by working with young people (aged 10 -18) while on a current court order and for 100% of young people to have suitable accommodation, reducing the likelihood of them re-offending, by the end of the order. No additional funding is available. Preventing homelessness is a key theme for the Youth Justice Board. Levels of response and priority given to accommodation provision vary across YOTs.

The sub-group was set up to enable YOTs to work to a clear and common policy framework in this area. The sub-group's Terms of Reference specify how the sub-group will operate; the first phase being to obtain data to create a shared evidence base and the second phase to look at the barriers and successes with the youth offending teams.

During July to October all YOTs are capturing information about the housing needs of young offenders. This will be analysed by the sub-group which will report and consult on the findings.

Nick Ronald asked how the information collected would be used. A report will be produced at the end of November from the evidence gathered,

exploring the housing needs of young ex-offenders, the barriers that exist to meeting those needs and examples of good practice. It is recommended that this will be presented to the Forum for comment and to discuss what further work is needed in respect of this vulnerable client group, before presenting the report and recommendations to the Board. The Chair asked if everyone was happy with this approach and all agreed.

In response to questions, Mark advised that about 80% of clients are currently being placed in suitable accommodation. He also indicated that the key client group for housing authorities is 16-17 year-olds who have experienced family breakdown. Claire advised that these kinds of issues are not just issues for housing related agencies and work on housing links into county re-offending strategies.

Laurie Priebe asked if the sub-group has taken on board the role of YMCA's and foyers. Mark advised they want to work with those organisations to raise awareness.

Chris Woolf asked if there are any links between this work and the work on choice based lettings by local authorities. The Group were advised that these schemes are being developed to deal with the diversity of vulnerability and to ensure that individuals are not disadvantaged because of their vulnerability.

Karen Stalbow reassured the Group that the work was linked into the work on accommodation pathways and that these linkages would continue to be looked at during the project.

In response to a question regarding the nature and role of other sub-groups, Sharon Smith described the groups established to date to support work on private sector renewal, rural affordable housing need, housing market assessments and overcrowding.

6. Local Area Agreements

Chris Woolf gave an update on the current developments on housing local area agreements between government and local authorities and sought feedback from the Forum on how these could develop effectively.

The local area agreements cover a three year period and are subject to some degree of negotiation on an annual basis. Historically, these are chequered across the country and are different between districts and counties.

There is an emerging issue around geography. DCLG want to review what is happening in local area agreements on housing as they are looking to broaden the agenda from Decent Homes to Decent Communities. There is a significant link with the long standing intention to look at the local authority strategic housing role - this may be reflected in the anticipated Local Government White Paper.

Feedback is requested on the sense of value of local area agreements, what the common barriers and problems are and how these can be resolved.

The Chair thanked Chris for his presentation and asked the Group for questions.

Laurie Priebe suggested LAAs could be developed to be mutually beneficial. David January suggested that for LAAs to work there needs to be good will and flexibility on both sides. David put forward to the Chair that an example of a good housing local area agreement would assist the Group in appreciating their potential.

The following points were noted by Chris Woolf who agreed to take them further:

- The Group would be interested in doing additional work to get a regional view of key issues that will make a difference
- Freedom and flexibilities are restricted by the legislative framework
- In at least two areas, the work has shown there is there a link between county and districts which has strengthened the process showing that actually there are some positives and real advantages of LAAs.

7. Disabled Facilities Grant Allocation Methodology

A consultation paper reviewing the operation of disabled facilities grant is expected towards the end of the summer.

A study by Bristol University in 2005 made recommendations including; RSLs funding their own adaptations, introducing flexibility / value for money on processes, possible broadening of coverage of the system, including a strategic approach to DFGs in regional housing and spatial strategies. Chris informed the Group that Baroness Andrews has advised these would be fed into the review.

Recommendations from Government Office will be put forward. DFG's allocations are outside the remit of the Regional Housing Board so there will be a meeting shortly to discuss how this might be handled, given that bids are expected to rise significantly and there is little scope for increases.

Chris Woolf asked the Group for any views for 2007/08 and put the following questions to the Group:

- Is there any data available on demand?
- Are there any views that the current demand is a one-off peak?
- Is a consultation event required?

The Forum suggested collating information from local authority waiting lists for DFGs and agreed that a consultation event would be helpful.

Barbara Compton suggested that replacing DF grants with loans would enable costs to be recouped. Elizabeth Cartwright advised that East Hampshire takes this approach.

The Chair asked the Group if they felt that GOSE should arrange a consultation event that included a presentation on the consultation paper by its authors from the DCLG. Members agreed that this would be helpful.

Action: GOSE

8. Sub-Regional Housing Market Assessments

Cath Stubbings advised that this was a progress report. At this point in time, there is no need for an active sub-group whilst only the pilot groups are going ahead. Cath however hopes to raise this item at an appropriate point in the future.

9. Any Other Business

The Group had no other business.

10. Arrangements for Future Meetings

The Chair reminded the Group that the RHF currently meets bi-monthly. The Chair informed the Group that it is the intention going forward into 2007 to move to quarterly meetings to mirror the pattern of RHB meetings. It has not yet been decided whether these meetings will be before or after the RHB meetings; but they are likely to be a close match with all other advisory groups. Dates for 2007 meetings will be circulated once arranged.

A workshop between HAG, the Affordable Housing Task Group and the RHF is being organised to review current gaps and agree the focus going forward on the Regional Housing Strategy. This means the RHF will meet in October, November and December. It is therefore proposed that one meeting is cancelled; the Group was in favour of this proposal. The Forum is scheduled to review the Terms of Reference at its October meeting and this will be kept in mind whilst arranging the workshop and the next RHF meeting. Dates will be circulated as soon as possible.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 3.50pm.