

# **SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

## **REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2007**

### **Present:**

Sharon Smith	CIH SE Regional Committee – Chair
Jeff Hanna	Reading Borough Council
Louise Strongitharm	Wokingham Borough Council
Clive Gorton	Catalyst Housing Group
Karen Stalbow	Shelter
Catherine Stubbings	South East England Regional Assembly
Paul Abey	Housing Corporation
Helen Burton	West Sussex Chief Housing Officer Group
Barbara Compton	Cities in the South East
Kate Dallip	SEEDA
Pete Errington	Home Builders Federation
John Littlemore	Kent Housing Group
Martin Nurse	National Housing Federation
Nigel Preston	Strategic Housing Officer Group
Nick Ronald	National Housing Federation
Kathryn Wiliamson	RAISE
Caroline Tindall	NHS Trust
Chris Woolf	GOSE
Graham Ashworth	HAG representative
Arlene Kersley	Berkshire Rural Communities Council
Michael Veryard	Buckinghamshire Housing Enabler Steering Group
Steve Kethero	GOSE
Kevin Hetherington	Surrey Chief Housing Officer Group

### **Apologies for absence**

Martin Tugwell	GOSE
Brian Horton	National Housing Federation
Mel Shad	National Housing Federation
Ian Walker	HAG representation
Ian Fitzpatrick substitute for Neil Fuller	East Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group
Meurig Lloyd substitute for Mike Stimpson	Southern Private Landlords Association

### **I. Minutes of previous meeting and matter arising:**

- I.1 Two errors were noted on the minutes. Martin Nurse was incorrectly recorded as present at the meeting. Home Builders Federation was incorrectly recorded as House Builders Federation.

- 1.2 The Accommodation Needs of Young Ex-offenders Sub Group report is to be considered by the Supporting People South East Regional Implementation Group and the outcome reported to the Regional Housing Board.
- 1.3 The Overcrowding Sub Group report has been presented to the Project Team and is due to be considered by HAG following revision. The work will tie in with the Housing Type and Size research and a report to the Board on 5 September is anticipated. This completes the work of the Overcrowding Sub Group.
- 1.4 The findings of the Regional Housing Strategy review will be brought to the Forum at the 25 June meeting. This has been delayed due to the timing of local government elections.
- 1.5 The Advisory Group Chairs met on 2 April and discussed the work programme. Two work areas were identified:
- BME
  - Good practice and innovation on the housing needs of older people.
- **Action: Group to forward suggestions on the direction the Board's focus should take and examples of good practice, in respect of the housing needs of older people, to June Cass within the next couple of weeks**

## **2. Report back from RHB**

- 2.1 Martin Nurse reported that two presentations from PUSH and Berkshire on Housing Market Assessments made up a major part of the meeting. Main discussion points were around the way HMAs are evolving and whether there should be more central/ regional guidance.
- 2.2 PPS3 and windfalls were discussed and there was a strong view that windfall sites should contribute to housing numbers. Other items discussed were the Planning Gain Supplement, National Affordable Housing Programme Progress report and the Regional Infrastructure Fund.
- 2.3 Cath Stubbings advised that central guidance on HMAs is now available. She stated that at the 2 March Board meeting it was decided to update the DTZ 2004 work and look again at identifying housing market areas in the South East. She pointed out that the guidance left a number of issues unresolved and correspondence will be going back to CLG from the Board.

### **3. Presentation on Thames Valley Key Worker methodology.**

3.1 Jeff Hanna gave a presentation on the Thames Valley West Key Worker research developed by four local authorities for the housing and labour markets of Reading, Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest.

3.2 The aim of the presentation was to share the methodology developed to enable Forum members to consider whether it represented an approach that could be applied consistently throughout the region. The presentation addressed the lack of objective or consistent methodology for defining key workers and the researchers' approach to identifying numbers in the locality, the scale and nature of demand, and the relationship with assessing general housing need. The presentation then examined their response to the problem: the design and implementation of an objective methodology for defining key workers, and outputs to inform commissioning and/or allocation of resources.

3.3 The work is intended to be signed off at the Berkshire Chief Executive's meeting on 10 May and will go to the Berkshire Leaders meeting on 18 May. Locally, implementation will be through Berkshire's Housing Strategists, Enablers & Planners, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Key Employers. It is hoped that the methodology will also go to the Board and be used to inform a consistent approach to developing an evidence base to underpin future bids for further resources to fund Key Worker accommodation.

3.4 Discussion indicated a level of interest in and support for the Thames Valley methodology but it became clear that alternative models have been developed in some areas. It was recognised that housing need continues to be a key consideration. The question was asked whether there was any need for such an exercise if the outcome was identification of a relatively small number of key workers. It was pointed out that it was a valuable contribution to the evidence base in certain areas and that the Hills Review focus on linkages between housing and employment could make this an important issue for the future.

- **Actions: Forum members to make members of their local networks aware of the work**
- **Forum to be updated if and when the report is presented to the Board.**

### **4. DTZ research into Housing Type and Size**

4.1 Cath Stubbings explained that the work had been commissioned towards the end of last year as additional evidence for the Regional Housing Strategy review and the draft South East Plan, with the question in mind as to whether the right type of housing was being built. She explained that the report concluded that this was happening in the private sector, but with an increase in flats which offer less flexibility. However, in the affordable sector there has been a more defined shift towards one and two bedroom flats.

- 4.2 The consultants' research and the findings of the Overcrowding Sub Group were used in the RHS review and will be used in a document making the case for additional funding to accompany the RHB funding submission to government.
- 4.3 Regional Housing Strategy consultation events have highlighted that larger (3 or more bedrooms) shared ownership may not be affordable and that financial problems arise when building larger homes due to the difficulty of recovering the costs through higher rents.
- 4.4 In discussion, Forum members explained the role of gap funding to offset the rent recovery problem and housing associations' varying approaches to staircasing and attitudes to risk. The pros and cons of maximising new supply, creating a supply chain by building more larger homes, and extending existing social homes were discussed and the role of housing for older people was highlighted.

## 5. Items for Information

### 5.1 Update from Homelessness Forum

Cath Stubbings reported that apologies had been received from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Homelessness Forum and a fuller report would be forthcoming at the next Regional Housing Forum meeting. She stated that youth homelessness had been flagged up as a particular gap in the South East and that the Homelessness Forum are organising an event to explore the issues around this.

Karen Stalbow informed the Group that a series of Housing Advice roadshows are planned beginning in Portsmouth on 23 May.

➤ **Action: Karen Stalbow to supply dates of all the Housing Advice roadshows to the Group**

### 5.2 Report back on Disabled Facility Grants

Chris Woolf extended thanks to those people that had attended the GOSE event at the beginning of March where there was significant input from a wide range of people. He stated that the purpose of the event was to bring together the key messages of how to fund aspirations for developing mechanisms, and to look at the wider questions of how to fund new provision and consider how to do things better and quicker. A large amount of material was gathered on the day and this has been passed to CLG. In terms of next steps no response has yet been received by GOSE from CLG.

### 5.3 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Guidance

Cath Stubbings stated that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Guidance together with a separate advice note has now been published. She asked for views on whether the guidance was an improvement for those working on the ground.

In response several attendees stated that they felt that this was a helpful document.

➤ **Action: Any further views to be emailed to Cath Stubbings**

## 6. Any Other Business

6.1 Paul Abey reported that the Housing Corporation is now in the process of issuing invitations to attend sessions on the use of the Economic Appraisal Tool. These will start on 29 May in Reading and will be rolled out through June and July. They will be restricted to two people from local authorities and one person from other agencies.

6.2 Kevin Hetherington asked how the Forum's views are fed to the Board. The Chair replied that the Forum's views go to the Board either verbally or in a written update, or via input into the submissions presented by other organisations/bodies to the Board. She commented that the Forum's role is to provide technical advice rather than to make decisions.

6.3 Cath Stubbings stated that this will be picked up again when the work programme for the next twelve to fifteen months is available.

**The meeting closed at 3:55 p.m.**

**Date of next meeting: 25 June 2007**