

**MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD MEETING:
7 MARCH 2008**

Attendees

Cllr Kris Hopkins	Chair
Patricia Farrell	Deputy Chair
Rob Pearson	English Partnerships
Stuart Whyte	Gateway (Humber)
Isobel Mills	Government Office
John Kirkham	Home Builders Federation
Ged Walsh	Housing Corporation
Cllr Allen Healand	Humber Housing Partnership
Tony Stacey	National Housing Federation
Cllr Jean Butterfield	North Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Cllr Jane Evison	Regional Housing Forum
Sally Rawlings	Rural Housing Interests
Cllr Sue Ellis	South Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Michael Gahagan	Transform South Yorkshire
Cllr Amanda Carter	West Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Alex Brown	Y&H Tenants and Residents (Deputy for Michael Hall)
Simon Foy	Yorkshire Forward
Carole Cozens	YHA
Nicola Baylis	YHA
Rob Warm	YHA

Visitors

Jameel Malik	Hull City Council
Karen Maxwell	Regional Housing Forum
Lindsay Greenwood	West Yorkshire Housing Partnership
James Paton	YHA
Martin Elliot	YHA
Mary Clark	YHA
Fay McCulloch	YHA

Apologies

Michael Hall	Y&H Tenants and Residents
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1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and the apologies were **noted**.

The Chair then informed the group that this would be the last meeting for Ged Walsh and Cllr Amanda Carter. It was noted that Ged would be leaving the Housing Corporation shortly and Cllr Carter would be stepping down as a Councillor in May. The Board thanked them both for their contribution and wished them well for the future.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 7 December 2008

The minutes of the last meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

The matters arising from the previous meeting were **noted**.

Members were updated on the implication of recent cuts to the Supporting People budget. It was **agreed** that Supporting People should be a substantive discussion item at the next meeting, combining the information paper with the outcome of the ongoing regional research into Supporting People.

Rob Warm

4. Regional Housing Board Investment Update

Members **noted** the response to CLG on the individual allocations to Local Authorities.

The various concerns that this process highlighted in each of the sub regions were also **noted**. Each of the sub regional representatives was then asked to comment on the outcome for their sub region:

Humber

- Reasonably content with the process and the eventual outcome.

North Yorkshire

- Content with the current position.
- Extremely pleased that they had found a way to secure funding for rural housing enablers.

- Acknowledge that the process had revealed some capacity issues within the Partnership but they are working to rectify them.

South Yorkshire

- Broadly content.
- Very difficult to split the Green Corridor into two – doesn't send a good message. Transform (South Yorkshire) proposed that in future the Green Corridor Board should be responsible for investment in the Green Corridor and there should be no specific ring fence around the resource for South East Wakefield.

West Yorkshire

- Reasonably content with the process, although they had some issues with the lack of co-ordination from Government in announcing Housing Market Renewal (HMR).

Members **agreed** that constructive letters should be sent to both the Housing Minister and the Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency detailing the difficulties that the delay to announcements on HMR funding caused the region and asking that, in the future, this was co-ordinated better.

Rob Warm

Members **agreed** that funding going into the Green Corridor project could be spent across the Green Corridor area, with no specific ring fence for South East Wakefield. Members also **agreed** that, in the event of an underspend across the Green Corridor as a whole, the funding could revert to Transform (South Yorkshire).

Members then discussed the £25,000 underspend on the Year 1 regional pot. It was **agreed** that this sum should be added to the Regional Supporting Delivery Fund so that all local authorities in the region can benefit from it.

There was a brief discussion around the Golden Triangle. Members were told that, following concerns raised by CLG, Government Office had sought to clarify the situation regarding the funding of the Golden Triangle. It was confirmed that CLG now accepts that, as the resource is not hypothecated, it is for the partnerships to determine how to spend the money in order to achieve the outputs/outcomes that have been agreed by the Regional Housing Board. As a matter of good practice however, CLG asks that the Golden

Triangle Partnership continues to review and evaluate its programmes, including whether it is achieving its stated objectives and is providing good value for money.

Members **noted**, and welcomed, the clarification on the continuation of this project.

5. Sub National Review Update

Members **noted** the update on the latest Sub National Review (SNR) activity in the region.

Members were informed that a date had not yet been confirmed for the publication of the consultation paper – although it was likely that it would be published after Easter but before the Parliamentary recess.

It was confirmed that local authority Leaders met with the Yorkshire Forward Board on 28 February 2008 to consider some options for future governance arrangements. Although the discussions were positive and constructive, no consensus was reached, therefore an officer group had been formed to take this work forward. At that meeting, local authority members had reiterated that, under the new arrangements, executive decisions on issues such as housing investment needed to be made by elected members.

6. Regional Housing Strategy Delivery Plan

Members considered the outline work programme for supporting delivery at regional level.

In the discussion that followed, a number of key points were raised:

- There needs to be a focus retained on issues relating to 'the people side of housing' – Supporting People, fair access for marginalized groups etc. This is at risk as we move towards an overly strong focus on numbers.
- The Board could look at the marketing of shared ownership homes across the region. However, we need to be realistic about the level of resource we have to carry out effective marketing.
- The increase in housing numbers may result in reduced design quality. The Board has a strong wish to see design quality, higher environmental standards, and increased numbers of affordable homes, progressing

together.

- Intelligence gathering is key – and a strand of work has to be about developing a much more up to date idea of how the market in the region is operating.
- Where possible, Local Authorities need to have consistent standards and expectations around levels of affordability so developers can't play one of against the other to get what they want.

Members **agreed** the outline work programme subject to the comments above.

It was also **agreed** that professional advice be sought to advise the Board on how best to market shared ownership properties.

Rob Warm

It was felt that the Regional Housing Forum could undertake some of this work. It was confirmed that this would be discussed further under the next agenda item.

Rob Warm

7. **Regional Housing Forum – Future Direction and Priorities**

Members **noted** the changing role of the Forum and its future priorities.

Members sought clarification on the proposal to establish private sector practitioners network. It was confirmed that this would be more focussed on local authorities that work with the private sector rather than a network made up of representatives of private sector organisations.

Members felt that it was important that the Forum is clear about its role and that it operates on a professional level – being paid for the work it undertakes and that it works with other organisations to avoid duplication.

It was **agreed** that the Board would write to the Forum outlining what work is available and inviting them to submit proposals on how they could assist delivery. If the Forum were confident that it could play a role in delivery, then a service level agreement (SLA) would be drawn up. In the first instance, this SLA would have to be until end March 2009 (as the Assembly only has a 12 month business plan). However, members did ask that in drafting the one year SLA, reference be made to the importance of long-term commitment to the work of the Forum.

Rob Warm

8. Mini Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the RSS Implementation Action Plan

Members **noted** the latest position on the Government's requirement for a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

They were then asked to provide feedback to influence the early stages of preparing the Project Plan for the review. In the discussion that followed, a number of points were raised:

- Timetable is also important.
- Strategic Land Availability Assessments are underway but the data is not yet available.
- There are gaps in the evidence for rural areas.
- Seeking to align the monitoring between the Assembly, Yorkshire Futures and Local Authorities. Transform (South Yorkshire) are also undertaking similar work – a discussion needs to take place between officers after the meeting on how this work can be joined up.
- The monitoring needs to analyse and assess the impact of what we have done in the past. The Implementation Action Plan will look at this.
- Should we not be assessing the success of the last RSS before we undertake a review?
- Annex A to the report, if brought up to date, would be mostly red.
- The mini review will need to be very clear on how housing will be phased etc.
- There is a risk that the market will slow-down.
- Understanding the market is essential – this should be a key concern for the Board.
- The Board needs to focus on intelligence and delivery.
- Would be useful to hear about current delivery issues from Home Builders Federation, National Housing Federation etc at next meeting.
- Need to increase the communication between private and public sector organisations.

Members were thanked for their comments. It was confirmed that an information note would be presented to each future meeting, during the review period, updating members on progress and that members would also be consulted via e-mail as appropriate.

Members then **noted** the Assembly's approach to implementation activities for 2008/09. As there was insufficient time to discuss this at the meeting, it was

agreed that an e-mail would be sent to members asking them to submit comments via e-mail.

9. **Regional Housing Board Monitoring**

Members **noted** the monitoring returns for the last quarter (ending December 2007).

North Yorkshire apologised for the lack of figures for the sub region. It was explained that they had had some capacity issues recently but they were working to rectify this and should be able to provide figures for the next quarter.

Members **agreed** that the figures were helpful although, due to the timing of Board meetings, they would always be out of date. It was also **agreed** that Sub Regional representatives should table up to date figures at meetings and, if necessary, be prepared to explain why they are 'red'.

It was suggested that the Board may want to start being more challenging to parts of the region where delivery was an issue – and that there should not be any automatic assumption that the Board was happy for money to be rolled forward into the next spending year.

It was confirmed that the Housing Corporation had now met its targets for the year.

10. **National Affordable Housing Programme 2008/11 – Rural Target**

Member **noted** the draft response Assembly officers had made to CLG's recent letter on the target for rural housing completions.

Sally Rawlings expressed disappointment that the Rural Housing Group had not been invited to feed in to the response. Officers apologised but stated that the timescales, and CLG requirements, had not allowed for them to consult Board members.

There was also some disagreement amongst Board members about whether we should ask CLG for the target to be split across settlements under 3000 and settlements under 10000 population. As the Board could not reach consensus on this issue, the Board declined to submit a formal response to CLG. However, the Board did ask that at the next meeting

there is a discussion about whether the current splitting of the rural target has affected the amount of resource going into smaller settlements.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

- **Gypsy and Traveller Update**
- **Provisional Regional Housing Board Meeting Dates 2008/09**

The information items were noted.

Date of Next Meeting: TBC

Nicola Baylis, Business Services Officer
12 March 2008