

**MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD MEETING:
20 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Present:

Cllr Kris Hopkins	Chair
Patricia Farrell	Deputy Chair
Stuart Whyte	Gateway HMR Pathfinder
Isobel Mills	Government Office
John Kirkham	Home Builders Federation
Ged Walsh	Housing Corporation
Cllr John Briggs	Humber Housing Partnership
Julie Gamble	National Housing Federation
Cllr Jean Butterfield	North Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Karen Maxwell	Regional Housing Forum (Deputy for Cllr Jane Evison)
Cllr Sue Ellis	South Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Michael Gahagan	Transform South Yorkshire HMR Pathfinder
Cllr Amanda Carter	West Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Alex Brown	Y&H Tenants and Residents (Deputy for Michael Hall)
Carole Cozens	YHA
Nicola Plumstead	YHA
Rob Warm	YHA
Sue Jeffrey	YHA

Visitors:

Barry White	Bradford MDC
Jan Clark	Humber Housing Partnership
Lindsay Greenwood	West Yorkshire Housing Partnership
Fay McCulloch	YHA

Apologies:

Rob Pearson	English Partnerships
Cllr Jane Evison	Regional Housing Forum
Michael Hall	Y&H Tenants and Residents
Jan Anderson	Yorkshire Forward

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He emphasised that this was a new and exciting chapter for the Board, as housing is now an Assembly responsibility in a way that it previously was not.

The Chair stated that the previous Housing Board was recognised nationally as one of the best Housing Boards, and therefore it was important to build on its success.

The Chair emphasised that that the key challenge for the Board would be getting a much stronger link between regional strategy and local delivery. He added that other challenges would include communicating to the region and making connections with other agendas.

The apologies for the meeting were **noted**.

2. Board Member Introduction

Sue Jeffrey gave an overview of the Assembly's new governance structures and where the Board sits within these structures. She explained that a Welcome Pack had been circulated to all members giving further details.

Rob Warm then gave a more detailed introduction to the Regional Housing Board and asked member for their views on future work practices and priority areas for the Board. In the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- The work undertaken and the achievements obtained by the previous Board were acknowledged.
- Need to identify the key priorities for the region as a whole, to deliver the Regional Housing Strategy.
- Need to ensure the Board retains its focus.
- The region is very diverse – how do we manage this? Do we focus on parts of the region or the whole?
- The Board should not reinvent work that has already been undertaken – need to add value to what is already in place.
- Need to identify a small number of really focussed priorities for the Board that could really add value and lead to big improvements in the region.

Rob then took members through a list of possible 'issues', identified by the Advisory Group, that the Board may wish to

look at over the coming year and asked members for any additional items. In the discussion that followed, the following issues were identified for inclusion:

- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
- The Northern Way and City Regions.
- The Local Government White Paper implications.
- Private Sector Involvement.
- Low demand housing – it was **agreed** that it would be useful to identify research that has already been done in this area.

Rob Warm

Members **agreed** that it would be useful to arrange an Awayday for Board members in early November to help decide what the key priorities would be for the Board in the coming year. Dates would be identified and circulated to members in early October.

Nicola Plumstead

Members were asked to forward any additional suggestion to Rob in advance of the Awayday. A paper would then be produced ahead of the session to help structure the discussion.

Rob Warm

Rob explained that a workplan for the Board will be produced in autumn 2006 and brought back to the Board for approval at its January meeting.

It was confirmed that the previous Board had produced a number of themed papers on key issues relating to housing. It was **agreed** that these would be circulated for information.

Isobel Mills

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 6 July 2006

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

4. Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2007

Rob informed members that the Comprehensive Spending Review will report in 2007 and will cover spending for the period 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11. He explained that CSR2007 would be very much focussed on how to make better use of existing levels of funding in order to achieve Government targets and priorities.

Rob confirmed that the Assembly and Yorkshire Forward had been invited to submit evidence and advice setting out how

existing levels of public funding could be better used to achieve the Government's regional economic performance and regeneration targets. This submission would include a section on housing in the region.

Members were asked for their comments. In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- The amount of funding is insufficient for the region – need to explain why and prove that we can deliver.
- Need to look at best practice in the region and what tools are being used.
- RHF confirmed that they had appointed consultants to undertake some work on affordable housing in the region – this could be used to highlight areas of best practice.
- Could look at a possible meeting with Yvette Cooper MP to discuss the housing issues further.

Rob also asked members whether they would be willing to endorse the three basic proposals set out in the Regional Housing Forums submission to CSR 2007.

Members **agreed** to endorse the three basic proposals. In addition, members asked for a summary of the key themes contained within the RHF CSR submission and it was **agreed** that this would be circulated.

Karen Maxwell

Julie added that the NHF had recently produced some information on affordability and availability of housing in the region and it was **agreed** that this would be circulated to members for information.

Julie Gamble

5. Regional Investment Strategy

Rob explained that one of the key roles of the Board would be to make recommendations to Government on allocation of capital funding for housing in the region. He then outlined the timescales set by DCLG for submitting advice on priorities to cover the period 2008-11.

Members **noted** the timetable for submitting the Regional Investment Strategy to Ministers.

Isobel then outlined the previous approaches to investment in the region and explained that for 2006-08, the previous Housing Board had agreed an approach based on sub regional investment around three broad themes – low demand, affordability and fair access and private sector

decency. She confirmed that the previous Board had agreed to allocate funding to these themes as follows:

- Low Demand – 40%
- Affordability and Fair Access – 40%
- Private Sector Decency – 20%

Rob added that earlier this year, as part of the Regional Funding Allocations exercise, the previous Board was asked to set out its long-term priorities for housing investment in the region. He confirmed that this advice was submitted to Government alongside similar advice relating to transport and the economy and included recommendations for the period 2008-11.

Rob confirmed that, in submitting this advice, the Board made a commitment to continue with the sub-regional investment planning approach and that the Board also decided to build upon the three priority investment themes by setting out a refined framework for public sector housing investment based around Places, Access and Homes.

Members **agreed** to reconfirm the decisions made by the previous Board as part of the RFA exercise and to agree a process of consultation with the region with the region on the proposed split between the three priority themes.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- The Board needs to retain as much flexibility as possible for as long as possible and try to avoid early decisions regarding allocation of funding.
- The sub regional approach is working well.
- The Board needs to monitor the effectiveness of its investments but should not be bureaucratic.
- Identifying good practice is not an issue, the issue is getting others to take this on board and improve. The Board could play a key role in driving delivery forward.
- Need a mechanism to support/incentivise good practice in both housing and planning practice and to encourage SRHPs and planners to work together – the Advisory Group could look at this if they get a clear steer from the Board.
- The Board needs to focus on allocating the funding where it is really needed.
- Longer timelines are required to effectively implement delivery and the Board needs to take a genuinely 'long

term' view.

Members **reconfirmed** the decisions taken as part of the Regional Funding Allocations exercise.

Members **agreed** to a process of consultation with the region on the intended split between the three priority themes, with a view to the Board making a decision on this split at its January meeting. They also **agreed** to a process of consultation with housing stakeholders on the most accurate and appropriate methodology for translating the thematic split into a sub-regional split.

Housing
Advisory Group

6. Regional Housing Research Programme

Carole Cozens informed members that the Regional Housing Board had agreed at its meeting on the 4 November 2005 to ask Ministers to release funding from the single housing capital pot to support a programme of research. She confirmed that this identified approximately £450k available for regionally coordinated research to increase understanding of the operation of the region's housing markets.

Members were asked to comment on the proposed research programme and to make any additional recommendations for future work. In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- Would be useful to have some work undertaken that provides a good analysis of the region's housing market.
- Could create a website that links together all the regions housing information or, alternatively, look at ways of more effectively linking together the existing information so it can be accessed and used by practitioners.
- Could look at impact assessments on delivery or look at ways of improving existing structures.
- Need to avoid undertaking too many small, one-off projects.

Members **agreed** to delay the development of a forward workplan for the research until after the Awayday in November.

Members also **agreed** to delegate all decisions on spending for the Regional Housing Research Programme to the Advisory Group, where the expenditure was less than £25K.

7. Developing a Gypsy and Traveller Action Plan

Rob explained that the Regional Housing Board, along with the Regional Planning Board, have a responsibility to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate provision for Gypsies and Travellers in Yorkshire and Humber.

He explained that recent research, commissioned by the Assembly, gives a better picture of current and future accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers across the region and that the research was designed to provide more clarity in the RSS as well as directing Board investment into those areas with the clearest strategic need.

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

- This is a regional issue, not just one for individual local authorities.
- Timescales for the planning process are long with respect to identifying sites.
- Need to work with both Gypsy and Traveller groups and the community as a whole when identifying sites.
- The sub regions would welcome an action plan for this work.
- WYHP have done some work on the needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups – this could be circulated to members for information.
- The issues around Gypsies and Travellers are still very political and politicians on the Board have a key role to play providing leadership on this agenda.
- Need to emphasise that effective enforcement needs to be part of any strategy.

Members **noted** the research and the advice given to the panel for the examination of the RSS.

Members **agreed** that there would be value in producing a separate Gypsy and Traveller action plan.

Members **agreed** that the Assembly and Government Office should pull together a regional group to take a regional lead on this issue.

8. Planning and Housing Delivery Grant Consultation

Rob explained that Government is currently seeking views on two related consultation papers: one on the principles and

Lindsay
Greenwood

Rob Warm

Rob Warm

ACTION

potential options for a new housing and planning delivery grant and one on the proposed allocations criteria for the planning delivery grant in 2007/08. The deadline for responses to both these papers is 17 October 2006

He suggested that the response to these consultations should be prepared by a joint officer group drawn from the Housing and Planning Boards, so that a response could be circulated to the Boards for comment and signed off by the Chairs of the Boards.

Rob Warm

Members **agreed** the outline of the proposed response.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- Terms of Reference for the Housing Advisory Group
- Integrated Regional Framework
- Rural Housing

The information items were **noted**.

Date of Next Meeting: 10 January 2007

Nicola Plumstead, Business Services Support Officer
21 September 2006