

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL - POLICY REVIEW

**Update for Members Panel
As at 22nd July 2008**

BACKGROUND

The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy is being reviewed with assistance from **GHR**. The review is currently underway and will examine the various forms of financial assistance the Council may give to homeowners to promote improvements in housing standards/quality across Copeland.

ACTION TAKEN

CONSULTATION

Postal Survey

A programme of consultation has commenced with a 4 page survey containing 102 questions. The questionnaire has been sent, together with a stamped return envelope to over 150 key stakeholders. These include; all Copeland Borough Council Councillors; clerks/secretaries of Parish Councils; local estate agents; Cumbria Social Services; Anchor Staying Put; CAB; Federation of Master Builders; Local Strategic Partnership; Cumbria Housing Officers Group and many others.

The professional views of all the Cumbria Housing Renewal authorities have also been sought.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to produce a sound foundation for future policy consideration and it is intended to complete this exercise by the end of July.

Stakeholder Interviews

To supplement the postal survey a programme of face to face interviews with key stakeholders has commenced. This is currently 50% complete but is subject to some minor delays due to stakeholder unavailability (holiday commitments etc.). The interviews are individually tailored to achieve an in depth analysis of stakeholder views. It is intended to complete all stakeholder interviews by end July/early August.

Officer Working Group

An internal Officer Working Group has been established and will meet three times. The first meeting was held on 21/07/08. The group comprises key Copeland Borough Council officers across the major disciplines involved in Housing Renewal. It will review the response to the consultation process with a view to ensuring that recommendations to the Member Panel are, robust, legal and administratively achievable.

Best Practice

GHR continues to research best practice in Housing Renewal and will feed this into the review process. As a part of this Anchor Staying Put have offered to meet GHR and Council representatives to demonstrate their service approach in other authorities.

Web Site

An article explaining the review has been placed on the Council's web site. The general public are invited to comment and/or take part in the postal survey.

CONCLUSIONS

The review process is proceeding largely in accordance with the timescale agreed. Early indications from the postal survey and the stakeholder interviews can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ ***The current policy is obsolete and needs change***
- ▶ ***The Current policy is not targeted effectively and fails to support other Council regeneration initiatives***
- ▶ ***There is a preference towards an 'area based' approach to housing renewal rather than a 'client' or 'theme' based approach***
- ▶ ***A preference to move financial assistance away from grant aid to other forms of assistance, in particular the use of land charges***

The consultation process is still underway, so these initial views should be treated with caution. However, the consistency of approach is strong and will have to be considered as important in the development of the Housing Renewal Policy.

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