

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Clements
LEAD OFFICER: Fergus Mc Morrow
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Summary and Recommendation:

This report updates the Executive on progress made with the Cumbria Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Project. Progress was considered at the meeting of the Strategic Housing Panel on 17 June 2009 and members resolved that the Executive be recommended to approve progress to date.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the meeting of the Strategic Housing Panel on the 9 September 2008 members considered a report recommending that Copeland should participate in the county wide Cumbria Choice Based Lettings scheme subject to a number of conditions being met. These were:

- the funding bid to the CLG should succeed
- the Council's financial contribution should be proportionate
- the scheme should be viable in terms of the number of participating organisations and their stock
- for the letting of homes in Copeland, the scheme should allow adequate weight to be given to bidders in significant housing need with local connections to the Borough's area
- no service users should be excluded other than those to whom statutory exclusions apply.

1.2 The initial report also stipulated that the financial implication as at 12 August 2008 was that the Council would have to make a one off payment of £10,000 towards costs in 2010/11 and that any cost variations would be reported to the Panel and on to the Executive in time for the final decision on participation to be made.

1.3 At its meeting on 11 November 2008 the Executive agreed in principle to join the scheme subject to the conditions listed in 1.1 above and that further progress reports are made.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 2.1 Following the report to the Panel in September the bid to the CLG was subsequently successful in obtaining the £100,000 grant. At this point it is still expected that the Council's contribution should be around £10,000 during the financial year 2010/11, although this amount will be reported to the Strategic Housing Panel and then to the Executive for their approval when confirmed.
- 2.2 A project manager was appointed following confirmation of the funding and she is now in place.
- 2.3 All the original partners are still members of the scheme and Allerdale and Barrow Councils who originally took no part in the group are attending meetings with a view to joining at a future point.
- 2.4 The project Board is currently drawing up a partnership agreement for all participants. This is a legally binding document and will oblige all members to formally commit to the scheme. It is envisaged that the draft of this document will be presented to the Strategic Housing Panel in September 2009 along with the exact spending commitment for members to consider and make a recommendation to the Executive on whether or not to join.
- 2.5 A day was held on June 26 to examine the proposed priority banding system for the scheme and officers ensured that the precondition on ensuring adequate weight is given to those with significant need and a local connection in the Copeland area is met. This day also addressed the final pre condition that no service users should be excluded other than those where a statutory exclusion applies.
- 2.6 The original target date for launching the scheme was June 2010 but this has now been moved to October 2010, which is much more realistic.
- 2.7 Members will note that there is another report on this agenda for a statutory housing allocations scheme. The Council must by law have such a scheme now. Members are also asked to note that if the Council joins the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme in 2010, the Council's allocations scheme will require amendment.

3. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

As indicated in the report to the Strategic Housing Panel on the 9 September 2008, and to the Executive on 11 November, the commitment of the Council is still seen to be £10,000, but this along with any cost variations will be confirmed to members before any final decision on membership is recommended. If the

Council decides to join the scheme a bid will be made for inclusion in the 2010/2011 budget.

4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN AND RECOMMENDATION

This report and recommendations are in accordance with the Council’s action plan following the Audit Commission’s housing inspection report of April 2008.

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	None
Impact on Sustainability	Will promote sustainable neighbourhoods
Impact on Rural Proofing	The scheme would be extended to rural communities
Health and safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Advertising of the scheme will be accessible to disadvantaged and minority groups
Children and Young Person’s Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Monitoring Officer comments	Report is for information only
s.151 Officer comments	No comment to add

Is this a key decision? No