

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2015 AT 2:00pm

Present: Councillors Lena Hogg, Chairman; John Bowman; Geoff Garrity (for items 6 and 8 only); Alan Jacob; Peter Stephenson and Paul Whalley.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Reg Heathcote

Officers: Julie Betteridge, Head of Customer and Community Services; Jessica Hall, Homelessness Officer and Clive Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

Also Present: Mr Neil Morland, Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd and Councillor George Clements.

SH 23/14 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH 24/14 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Peter Stephenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items involving Home Group due to being a Home Group tenant.

SH 25/14 Arrangement of Agenda

RESOLVED - That due to the Officers being present, Item 8 (Strategic Housing Market Assessment) was taken after Item 6 (Proposal for making Private Rented Sector offer to Statutorily Homeless Households).

SH 26/14 Proposal for making Private Rented Sector offer to Statutorily Homeless Households

Mr Neil Morland from Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd, presented to the Panel on adopting powers to make a Private Rented Sector Offer to homeless households. Mr Morland outlined the legislative changes that came into effect from 2012 and the new duties affecting local authorities.

The Panel was advised that a new Private rented sector offer would be

- an offer of an assured shorthold tenancy made by a private landlord to the applicant in relation to any accommodation which is, or may, become available for the applicant's occupation
- made with the approval of the local housing authority with the landlord with a view to bringing the authority's duty to an end
- a fixed term tenancy, for at least 12 month

- accommodation that is suitable to occupy.

The re-application duty would arise if the applicant was an assured tenant, had been served a valid Section 21 notice and the date for possession stated in the Section 21 notice had passed.

Mr Morland continued by stating the grounds for suitability which were that the property was:

- in a reasonable condition
- PAT tested
- Fitted with smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Gas safety and energy performance certificated

and that the Landlord was a fit and proper person, that there was no possession order on the property and there was a written tenancy agreement.

During the discussion that followed, Members enquired about the property inspections and who funds them, the tenants security, monitoring of landlords.

The Homelessness Officer stressed the Homeless Team's priority was to ensure that Copeland Borough Council met its legislative obligation and was working hard in preventing homelessness.

It was suggested that this be added as a future item for the Scrutiny Work Programme.

It was further suggested that if agreed, this be reviewed in twelve months.

RESOLVED – That

- a) the presentation be received and noted,
- b) the policy proposal be noted,
- c) the Strategic Housing Panel recommends Council to adopt the power to end the duty by making a private rented sector offer for some accepted cases, and
- d) this be reviewed in twelve months.

SH 27/14 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014

The Head of Customer and Community Services introduced the final version of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014, which had previously been to this panel in draft form in December 2014.

RESOLVED – That the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014, be considered and recommended for approval by Executive at their next meeting on 24 March 2015.

SH 28/14 Homelessness Action Plan Progress Report

The Panel were provided with an update from the Head of Customer and Community Services on the Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 and the End of Year Statistics for 2014-2015.

It was noted that there were currently three household in temporary accommodation.

The Head of Customer and Community Services invited any further comments and that they be sent direct to her.

RESOLVED – That the update on the Homelessness Action Plan be noted.

SH 29/14 Disabled Facilities Grants 2014/15 Report

A report was submitted updating members of the number of referrals made from the occupational therapist to the team responsible for disabled adaptations.

Members thanked the Disabled Facilities Grants team for their continued good work

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SH 30/14 Copeland Housing Strategy and Year 4 Action Plan

The Strategic Housing Panel considered the progress made in the Copeland Housing Strategy Year 4 Action Plan 2014/15.

It was noted that task 4.1.5 of the report (Choice Based Lettings Board Review) was amber and were advised that the timescale had changed and was now June 2015.

RESOLVED – That

- a) the progress made in the Copeland Housing Strategy Year 4 Action Plan 2014/15 be noted,
- b) the actions show as completed be signed off, and
- c) the action plan be rolled forward into a 5th year.

SH 31/14 Copeland Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

The Panel received details of the current spend and reasons for allocating the Discretionary Housing Payments together with those that had been refused.

RESOLVED – That

- a) the current spend and reasons for allocating the DHP and expectation that all the DHP available budget will be spent within the financial year be noted,
- b) the refusal decisions and reasons be noted, and
- c) the option of bringing DP allocation and delivery into the Council’s Strategic Housing Service in line with the end of the Shared Service Arrangement by 1 July 2015 be supported.

SH 32/14 Home Group Annual Update

The Panel was advised that the verbal update was not available for the meeting, but a written update would be circulated to Members when available.

The meeting closed at 3:40pm

Chairman

Date