

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2013 at 2:00pm**

Present: Councillors George Clements (Chairman); Alan Jacob; Sam Pollen and Peter Stephenson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Reg Heathcote and Paul Whalley.

Officers: Debbie Cochrane, Housing Services Manager; Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy and Clive Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

#### **SH 27/12 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2012 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **SH 28/12 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Peter Stephenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda items 10 (Rent Weeks – Home Group) due to being a tenant of Home Group.

#### **SH 29/12 Home Improvement Agency**

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with a verbal update on the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) stating that Age UK are to take the lead in the HIA role.

Good progress was being made as all partners were willing to work together. Members were advised that the Partnership Agreement between partners will be put before the Panel at a future meeting.

During the discussion that followed, the subject of Crisis Loans was raised. Members were advised that these had been re-named and would be included in a briefing note that was being prepared and would be circulated.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be received.

#### **SH 30/12 Year 2 Strategic Housing Action Plan Outcomes/Year 3 Priorities**

The Housing Services Manager and the Head of Development Strategy gave an overview of the Copeland Housing Strategy Action Plan Year 2 outcomes and then in more detail, those items that had not been completed by their target dates.

During the discussion that followed Homelessness was identified as a subject to be an agenda item for a future meeting.

It was also suggested that a Press Release be issued regarding £800k being spent by the Environment Agency in the Orgill area of Egremont regarding flooding.

A list of proposed priorities for the Year 3 Housing Strategy Action Plan 2013/14 was circulated to members and discussed.

The proposed priorities were:-

Objective 1 - Facilitating right housing offer

- SHLAA working with partners on sites including extra care Whitehaven site
- Gypsy and Traveller site locations
- Annual review of NHB
- Working across Cumbria on affordable housing – HCA investment Planning
- Review Egremont local lettings policy – investigate within rural areas with Parishes via SLA with CRHT
- Rural Foci – Linked to survey – via SLA with CRHT
- Landlords Forum
- Maintain rent deposit scheme

Objective 2 – Making best use of existing stock

- Green Deal linkages
- Empty Homes – link to Council Tax changes and HCA project – monitoring and maintaining picture
- Stock condition enforcement

Objective 3 - Enabling people to access housing and support need when needed

- Older peoples housing group – 2 foci per year
- Younger peoples housing |group
- Homelessness strategy renewal – continued focus on prevention
- Welfare reform impact and partnership activity
- Foyer
- DFG – maintain impact/turnaround and partnership activity
- Moving into integrated Home Improvement Agency led by Age UK

Objective 4 – An integrated delivery approach

- Cumbria Housing Executive Group
- Copeland Housing Partnership
- Year 3 Delivery Plan
- Linking to Copeland Partnership, locality priorities and other themed partnerships.

**RESOLVED** – That

- a) the update be received, and
- b) the proposed priorities for Year 3 Housing Strategy Action Plan 2013/14 be agreed.

**SH 31/12 Disabled Facilities Grants position statement**

The Housing Services Manager informed the Panel of the current position regarding Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) approvals and commitments.

It was stated that the DFG budget for 2012/13 was £500k, current approvals were £450,000 as at end of January 2013 and referrals in process would fully commit this budget.

It was further stated that an additional 30 referrals would be ready for approval before the financial year end with an additional cost to the service of approximately £50k.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

**SH 32/12 Gypsy and Traveller Protocol**

The Housing Services Manager advised Members that one of the actions for the Cumbria Housing Group was to revisit the protocol for responding to Gypsy and Traveller encampments.

This work was undertaken by the County wide research and information group.

The Panel was advised that the tender process for the Accommodation Assessment was being undertaken now with a shortlist of sites identified by the end of 2013, after which the consultation process would take place.

A written question had been received from Councillor Paul Whalley regarding the inclusion of the RSPCA as welfare advisors/other partner agencies. It was stated that the RSPCA were already included and appeared at the bottom of page 2 of the draft Protocol.

**RESOLVED** – That

- a) the report be noted, and
- b) the Joint Agency Protocol and Policy Statement for responding to unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments be agreed.

**SH 33/12 Rent Weeks – Home Group**

The Housing Services Manager outlined to Members that Home Group tenants who commenced their tenancy prior to the stock transfer traditionally paid their rent over a 48 week period, giving them two 'free' weeks in the spring and two 'free' weeks in the summer.

Tenants who commenced their tenancy after the stock transfer paid over a 52 week period.

The Panel was advised that Home Group were proposing to move all tenants to the 52 week period and would be going to the Joint Steering Group for permission to do so.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted

The meeting closed at 3:35pm

Chairman .....

Date .....