

## **Cumbria Rural Housing Trust – Service level Agreement**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor Clements  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Julie Betteridge  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Debbie Cochrane

### **Summary:**

**The Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria Rural Housing Trust is attached. It is recommended that the SLA and monitoring arrangements are agreed.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Given the challenging financial settlement Copeland has received from Government we continue to look at how we can work both corporately and with our partners, to establish how best we can use the resources that will be at our disposal.
- 1.2 Partners to the Housing Strategy recognise the crucial role they will play in helping us to achieve our shared objectives – they are essential to our success.

## **2. AIMS**

2.1. The following strategic housing objectives were adopted in 2011;

- Facilitating the right housing offer to support economic growth and community sustainability.
- Making the best use of existing housing stock
- Enabling people to access the housing and support they need, when they need it.

## **3. Cumbria Rural Housing trust**

3.1 Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (CRHT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee. It's statement of purpose is: The relief of poverty, in particular for persons who are suffering hardship or distress as a result of poor housing in the rural communities of Cumbria, in particular by the provision of information and advice on matters of housing.

3.2 CRHT's aim is: to keep rural communities vibrant and sustainable both socially and economically by helping individuals and communities in need of housing.

#### **4. Objectives**

4.1 It is planned that CRHT's work will be concentrated mainly on rural housing enabling, working with rural communities and others to ensure that good affordable housing is available where required.

4.2 Funding will be provided to CRHT to undertake rural housing enabling work to respond to the levels of housing need and assist communities to identify, develop and progress affordable housing opportunities in the rural parts of the district.

#### **5. Monitoring**

5.1 The Service Level Agreement will be monitored and reviewed by the Strategic Housing Panel.

#### **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Partnership working with CRHT will ensure that the objectives highlighted above (2.1) are achievable in rural areas within Copeland.

6.2 The Service Level Agreement will ensure advice and support is available to parishes or communities that are;

- Interested in exploring opportunities for the development of affordable (and/or) local housing or returning empty properties back into use
- Experiencing conflicts within the community or with other agencies due to housing issues
- Undertaking Neighbourhood Planning and/or community right to build.

**Copeland Borough Council & Cumbria Rural Housing Trust**

**Service Level Agreement 1 April 2013 to 31 MARCH 2015**

PURPOSE

1. Copeland Borough Council (CBC) provides support to local community groups and voluntary organisations to enable a wide range of services for local people and to support the local economy. By working in partnership with other local groups/agencies, it ensures that we are all working towards the same goals and enhancing the quality of life in the area.
2. The council will provide £? Of funding to Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (CRHT) to enable CRHT to support communities that have a need for affordable housing (and/or local housing) and to identify potential solutions to meet that need.
3. CRHT is a charitable company limited by guarantee. CRHT's statement of purpose is: The relief of poverty, in particular for persons who are suffering hardship or distress as a result of poor housing in the rural communities of Cumbria, in particular by the provision of information and advice on matters of housing.
4. CRHT's aim is: to keep rural communities vibrant and sustainable both socially and economically by helping individuals and communities in need of housing.
5. It is planned that CRHT's work will be concentrated mainly on rural housing enabling (RHE), working with rural communities and others to ensure that good affordable housing is available where required.
6. This Service Level Agreement sets out the arrangements between CRHT and the council. This agreement will commence on 1 April 2013 for a period of 24 months, terminating on 31 March 2015.

OBJECTIVES

1. Funding will be provided to CRHT to undertake Rural housing Enabling work to respond to the levels of housing need and assist communities to identify, develop and progress affordable housing opportunities in the rural parts of the district.
2. The enabling work will be prioritised based upon Parishes, or clusters of Parishes, with housing need as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
3. CRHT will advise and support Parishes or communities that are;
  - Interested in exploring opportunities for the development of affordable (and/or) local housing or returning empty properties back into use.
  - Experiencing conflicts within the community or with other agencies due to housing issues.
  - Undertaking Neighbourhood Planning and/or Community Right to Build
4. CRHT will liaise with Council staff as well as other organisations to seek opportunities for rural affordable housing development and the promotion of affordable housing in rural areas.

5. CRHT will also support the council to raise awareness and find solutions to issues which are significant threats to community sustainability including; affordable warmth, poor quality social or private rented homes and the allocation of existing housing.

#### FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT

1. Copeland Borough Council agrees to pay Cumbria Rural Housing trust the sum of ....
2. Cumbria Rural Housing trust's standard hourly rate is £x, which would equate to x hours or x weeks @ 37 hours per week.
3. The manager of CRHT will provide a monthly timesheet to record time spent by officers allocated to the following headings;
  - Preparation time for meetings with parish Councils or community groups
  - Attending meetings (including travel time)
  - Collating information for community groups and others, and liaising with groups and other partners
  - Proactively assisting some communities in taking forward suitable solutions to their housing issues e.g. researching possible sites for new build, liaising with landowners, investigating possible funding options and development partners, or drawing together options for dealing with other community concerns (such as CBL allocation policies)
  - Attending relevant housing meetings or events in Copeland and Cumbria, commenting on and inputting into council policies and wider Cumbria and national housing policies which may affect rural Copeland.
  - Attending meetings on topics such as gypsies and Travellers, neighbourhood planning, affordable warmth or other issues relating to rural communities and rural housing
4. Where time is spent covering issues that are wider than Copeland District, where other partners are funding the work of CRHT, the time will be apportioned accordingly and this information will be included in the timesheets.

#### COMMITMENTS UNDER THIS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

##### Cumbria Rural Housing Trust

1. CRHT will;
  - Acknowledge the Council's financial support in the annual accounts, reports, material used for publicity purposes and when undertaking work on behalf of the council
  - Provide regular updates and outcomes information to the council in a format to be agreed with the council's housing services manager
  - Ensure that its actions are reflective of the council's commitment and obligation to promoting equality and diversity between groups in the local community.

- It is understood that from the outset of the agreement, it will sometimes be difficult to accurately predict the number of CRHT officer days certain projects will require. In order for work streams to be effectively monitored, CRHT will notify the council, at the earliest opportunity, if the actual number of days used on a project is likely to exceed the previously agreed predicted days.
2. Copeland Borough Council will;
- Provide the support and advice of CBC housing officers to CRHT as required, and ensure good communication between other council staff.
  - Work jointly on new developments/networking partnerships
  - Ensure that CRHT remains informed of any policy or strategy developments and events and forums that may be of interest and may affect the future work programme
  - Provide a named contact to deal with general issues (this will be the housing services manager).
  - Arrange liaison meetings as agreed with CRHT

#### MONITORING

1. This agreement will be monitored and reviewed via Strategic Housing Partnership meetings.
2. Both organisations agree to consult each other before introducing any changes likely to impact on this agreement.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Both organisations agree to respect the confidentiality of information shared between them and not to disclose any information shared between them and not to disclose any information to third parties without the prior approval of the other organisation.

#### RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

Debra Cochrane – Housing Services Manager, Copeland Borough Council

Judith Derbyshire – Manager, Cumbria Rural Housing Trust