

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 10:00AM**

Present: Councillors G Clements, Chairman; J Bowman; A Jacob;  
J G Sunderland and Mrs C Watson

Officers: L Priebe, Housing Services Manager; D Cochrane, Housing Policy Manager; J Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy;  
A Jackson, Web Manager (Item 10 only) and C Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

P Walker, Chief Executive attended to update on the Housing Inspector's Report, minute SH 48 refers.

Apologies for absence: Councillors J Jackson and R Pitt.

Also present: Mrs A Thorne, Home Group (for Items 6 and 7 only).

#### **SH 39 Minutes of the Meetings**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2010 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **SH 40 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Clements declared a Personal Interest in the agenda items due to being a Board Member of Copeland Homes.

#### **SH 41 Home Group Short Notice Inspection and Action Plan**

Mrs Thorne, Home Group, provided Members with an overview of the Tenant Services Authority Short Notice Inspection undertaken by the Audit Commission from 26-30 April 2010. The report for which was published in September 2010.

Members were advised the the scope of the inspection covered the Home Group nationally and was focussed on three services, Responsive Repairs, Gas Services and Resident Involvement. The Audit Commission also assessed how the Home Group performed these services in terms of , Access and Customer Care, Diversity and Value for Money.

The presentation was then open to questions from Members and Officers.

The Panel thanked Mrs Thorne for the update and requested that they be kept informed of the progress being made. It was suggested that Mrs Thorne be invited to update this Panel at the appropriate time and the Housing Services Manager liaise with her to arrange.

**RESOLVED** - That

- a) the update be received, and
- b) Mrs Thorne be invited to update this Panel with progress at the appropriate time.

**SH 42     Home Group Housing Register and Allocations**

The Housing Services Manager introduced this item which was in response to a request made by Executive when adopting the Allocations Policy of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Panel were advised that the Chairman and Housing Services Manager were currently at the Neighbourhood Forums.

The presentation was then open to questions from Members and Officers.

During discussion, it was suggested that this report be copied to the Executive.

**RESOLVED** – That

- a) the report be considered,
- b) a response to Executive be prepared by the Housing Services Manager confirming that the Panel is satisfied with the Allocations Policy of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme and that it was important to improve the choice for tenants and the system to be used ensures that people take responsibility for themselves,
- c) a copy of this report be forwarded to the Executive.

**SH 43     2010/11 Strategic Housing Market & Needs Assessment**

The Panel were provided with an overview of the 2010/11 Strategic Housing Market & Needs Assessment by the Housing Services Manager.

Members were advised that there was a shortfall of 168 properties per annum across the borough (15 per annum within the National Park)

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

**SH 44     Empty Homes and Park Homes in the Borough**

Members were informed of progress regarding Empty Homes and Park Homes in the Borough.

With regard Empty Homes, Goose Housing Research had been commissioned to assist in strategy development.

With regard park Homes, Goose Housing Research had also been commissioned to undertake a survey of park homes across the

Borough, including within the Lake District National Park Authority area.

The purpose was to identify and determine the extent of park homes; report on physical attributes and environmental conditions of homes and sites; and to define the demographic attributes of resident households.

During the discussion that followed, Members expressed their concern at the style and tone of letter being used by Goose Housing Research.

**RESOLVED** - That the progress report be received;

**SH 45**     **Housing Services on the Council Website**

Members were provided with an introduction to the new Housing Services area of the Council's website by the Housing Policy Manager accompanied by a visual demonstration by the Web Manager.

The Panel were advised that the Housing Services web pages of Allerdale, Brent and Exeter Councils were looked at for ease of navigation.

The Housing Services area of the new Copeland web site was divided into three sections Housing Advice, Housing Option and Housing Strategy. By entering one of those areas, further help was available as was link to appropriate forms.

The Web Manager was thanked for her work in developing the new site.

**RESOLVED** - That the presentation be received.

**SH 46**     **Bi-monthly Report of the Strategic Housing Improvement Plan**

Members received an updated Strategic Housing Improvement Action Plan and questions were invited.

There was one item reported as being overdue within section SH5.2 (Review the current working arrangements with the Home Improvement Agency). Following discussion, it was suggested that the wording be amended to read 'Influence Home Improvement Agency in securing money for the Borough'.

It was suggested that in future, the Action Plan be reported by exception.

**RESOLVED** - That

- a) the updated Strategic Housing Improvement Action Plan be received,

- b) the item reported as being overdue within section SH5.2 be amended as the action is dependant on a decision of the Supporting People Commissioning body, not merely for the Council.
- c) in future, the Action Plan be reported by exception, and the next Bi Monthly Report be brought to this Panel in January 2011.

**SH 47     Briefing on Housing Implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review**

The Housing Services Manager provided an overview of Housing Implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Particular reference was made to the Government funding for the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) reducing from £8.54b in the last spending round to £4.5b over 2011-2015.

Reference was also made to a potential increase in social housing rents to 80% of market rents for new tenants and a new tenure model for them.

Members expressed their concern and requested a further report on this subject be brought to the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** - That

- a) the report be noted, and
- b) a further report on this subject be brought to the next meeting.

**SH 48     Any Other Business**

**Housing Inspector's Report**

The Chief Executive joined the Panel to discuss the recent Housing Inspector's report.

The Panel were advised that good progress in Copeland had been made.

Members were also advised that the Housing Inspector was to contact the Chairman of this panel on 4 November and it was anticipated that the Housing Inspector was to be invited to visit Copeland in 2011 to check on the progress made.

It was noted that the Improvement Action Plan was making good progress.

The Panel expressed their support for the approach being taken.

**RESOLVED** - That

- a) the update be received, and
- b) the approach being taken be agreed by the Panel.

**Copeland Home Steering Group**

The Panel was requested to nominate two Members for appointment to the Copeland Homes Steering Group.

It was moved by Councillor J Bowman, duly seconded and **AGREED** – that Councillor G Clements be appointed to the Copeland Homes Steering Group.

It was then moved by Councillor G Sunderland, duly seconded and **AGREED** – that Councillor A Jacob also be appointed to the Copeland Homes Steering Group.

The meeting closed at 12:40 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....