

**Proposed Merger of Cumbria Housing Executive with  
Cumbria Supporting People Commissioning Body**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor Clements  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Julie Betteridge  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Laurie Priebe, Strategic Housing Services Manager

Summary and Recommendation:

The merger of the Cumbria Housing Executive with the Supporting People Commissioning Body has been proposed and the suggested constitution is attached as Appendix A.  
The Panel are requested to have careful regard to the constitutional remit of the proposed body, which is extensive. Members' scrutiny is invited and their views are sought.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Cumbria Housing Executive is not a statutory body but is the over-arching group that oversees the production of the Cumbria Housing Strategy and the county-wide evidence base that underpins it. The strategy was produced in 2006 for a lifetime of 5 years and is now in process of revision.
- 1.2 The Cumbria Supporting People Commissioning Body is "statutory" in as far as it was set up in 2003 following the government's reform of revenue funding for housing related support services.
- 1.3 With effect from that date all revenue funding streams for housing support services (for example, the support provided for residents in sheltered housing) were removed and replaced with a programme grant direct from government.
- 1.4 The government's model for non-unitary areas was to make County Councils the accountable bodies for the grant. However, district councils are the statutory housing authorities so, to ensure their participation, the model was for counties to create Commissioning Bodies that included district councils and others.

1.5 The Cumbria Supporting People Commissioning Body was therefore set up in 2003. It is chaired by an elected member of the County Council and membership includes Councillors representing each district. All elected members are supported by officers.

## **2 Issues**

2.1 Between 2003 and 2010 the Supporting People Programme Grant was ring-fenced for housing related support services. In plain language, it could not be used to provide housing management, adult social care or nursing care.

2.2 In 2010 the ring-fence was removed. In light of that, the merger of the Supporting People Commissioning Body with the Cumbria Housing Executive was proposed. The stated intention is to create an over-arching group with a remit for strategic commissioning of housing and related services throughout Cumbria.

2.3 The proposed constitution is attached as Appendix A. Officers would particularly draw members' attention to paragraphs 6.1 to 6.4 and to the bullet points at the end of the Appendix.

# **FUNCTIONS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CUMBRIA HOUSING EXECUTIVE/COMMISSIONING GROUP**

(Previously Cumbria Housing Executive Group &  
Supporting People Commissioning Body)

## **1. Purpose of the Cumbria Housing Executive/Commissioning Group**

- 1.1 To develop a county-wide local authority perspective and view on housing and related issues
- 1.2 Performance manage the delivery of the Cumbria Housing Strategy
- 1.3 Endorse and seek approval for the completed housing strategy from strategic housing authorities and other partners
- 1.4 Oversee the work of the Cumbria Housing Officers Group and associated Expert Groups
- 1.5 Provide strategic links between the CHE/CG and other local government organisations within the area, i.e. Cumbria LEP
- 1.6 Promote the work of the CHE/CG within local government and other partner agencies
- 1.7 Lobby and feed into consultation locally, regionally and nationally
- 1.8 Promote joint initiatives within the County which maximise resources and make most efficient use of them
- 1.9 Monitor the effectiveness of service delivery in Cumbria and work together for continuous improvement

## **2. Functions of the Cumbria Housing Executive/Commissioning group**

- 2.1 To agree the Cumbria Housing Strategy 2011-2015 including the Strategic Objectives and the Actions identified in the Action Plans of the four Expert Groups
- 2.2 To monitor the effectiveness of the Expert Groups in terms of delivery against the action plans. The Expert Groups will work to clear terms of reference agreed by the CHE/CG.
- 2.3 To act as the Lead accountable body for Housing issues in Cumbria.
- 2.4 To agree the Supporting People element within the 'Active Living in Cumbria' – Prevention Strategy

- 2.5 To oversee and approve the Supporting People efficiency plan and service reviews.

**3. Membership of the Cumbria Housing Executive/Commissioning Group,**

- 3.1 The CHE/CG shall be comprised of eleven members nominated by the bodies they represent as follows:
- 1 representative of Cumbria County Council – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care;
  - 1 representative of each of the District Councils in Cumbria – Housing Portfolio Holders; namely Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council;
  - 1 representative of the Lake District National Park Authority
  - 1 representative of the Registered Provider
  - 1 representative of the Cumbria NHS Partnership Trust;
  - 1 representative of the National Probation Service for Cumbria

3.2 Where in the view of the CHE/CG, and in exceptional circumstances, a representative is being consistently obstructive to the proper working of the Group or is consistently acting contrary to the principle of effective partnership working, the CHE/CG may resolve that the Chair communicates its concerns to the appropriate chief officer of the body nominating the representative concerned.

3.3 Where the usual representative of a body cannot attend, that body may send a substitute to the CHE/CG

3.4 Each representative may be accompanied at meetings of the CHE/CG by an Officer (not more than two) from the body that he or she represents.

**4. Meetings of the Cumbria Housing Executive/Commissioning Group**

- 4.1 The CHE/CG shall meet bi-monthly and may hold other extraordinary meetings as may be necessary from time to time;
- 4.2 The Officer supporting the Chair has the responsibility of convening meetings and preparing the agenda, minutes and reports for meetings;
- 4.3 At least 21 days clear notice of meetings shall be given in writing to all representatives, unless by reason of the urgency with which business has

arisen, such a period of notice would be impossible, in which case as much notice as is possible in the circumstances will be given;

- 4.4 Any member of the CHE/CG, or a group of members, may request the Chair to convene a meeting to deal with a particular matter, but the decision as to whether to comply with such a request shall be that of the Chair and Vice Chair jointly
- 4.5 The Expert groups will meet bi monthly and report to the Cumbria Housing Officers Group, who in turn will report to the CHE/CG.

## 5. Rules of Procedure at meetings

- 5.1 The quorum for a meeting shall be six members.
- 5.2 The Chair of the Group will be elected annually at an Annual General Meeting. Initially, the Group shall be chaired by a District Council member (2011-12), with the Vice Chair being held by the County Council member. Future positions will be determined at the respective AGM.
- 5.3 In respect of all decisions the representatives shall endeavour to reach a consensus without the necessity for formal voting.
- 5.4 If voting is necessary each representative shall have a vote and the vote of each representative carries equal weight.
- 5.5 If voting is necessary all decisions shall be by unanimous vote.
- 5.6 The vote of substitute representatives carries equal weight with the votes of the usual representatives.
- 5.7 Persons accompanying representatives by virtue of clause 2.16 do not have a vote.
- 5.8 A representative must declare any interest in any matter relating to a decision, or proposed decision, by the CHE/CG. Where such a declaration is made, the representative will be prevented from speaking and voting on the matter in question.
- 5.9 The meetings of the CHE/CG will be rotated amongst the partner organisations. The relevant host organisation will provide a secretary to the meeting and shall keep a record of all proceedings and decisions.

## 6. Financial and compliance matters

- 6.1 The County Council, as Administering Authority for the Supporting People Grant, has the right to advise the CHE/CG on financial and compliance matters affecting the Supporting People Grant.
- 6.2 Where any decision raises a financial and compliance matter as mentioned above, the CHE/CG may not make a decision which is incompatible with advice on that matter from the County Council.
- 6.3 The CHE/CG will oversee the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding provided to the partner Housing Authorities in respect of discharging their statutory homelessness function.
- 6.4 The CHE/CG will oversee and agree the allocation of any funding secured from other bodies, such as the Homes & Communities Agency, the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership etc, for the delivery of Housing related initiatives i.e. the National Affordable Housing Programme, the New Homes Bonus, Regional Growth Fund etc.

7. **General**

- 7.1 Subject to any express provision made by this constitution, the CHE/CG may regulate its own proceedings;
- 7.2 This constitution will be reviewed annually by the membership of the CHE/CG

## Benefits of merging Cumbria Housing Executive and SP Commissioning Body

- Reduces the number of meetings held & the associated costs
- Combines the Agendas of these two housing groups
- Aligns strategic housing issues (responsibility of the Districts) with supported housing, the new LEP and other housing related issues that are the responsibility of the County Council, i.e. Prevention initiatives, extra care housing etc
- Provides the opportunity to have the strategic overview of housing and support initiatives across the County
- There would be one body representing all Housing issues in Cumbria, which would make it easier for other partners when consulting & carrying out their work.
- The group could oversee the SP Budget (approx £10m) any HCA funding i.e. NAHP, new homes bonus, empty homes fund, and any other funds such as the homelessness prevention grant, which are currently reported upon separately
- Provides the opportunity for closer working between the districts & County when considering funding issues, for example if Carlisle CC are seriously considering the closure of their homeless hostels, could the other Districts have access to the hostels for a financial contribution? A merged group could consider all of the funding sources, such as the Homeless prevention grant and the Supporting people grant being accessed, and identify where cross LA working could occur
- Cumbria CC are happy for the Districts to continue chairing the group and the County would act as vice chair
- The Cumbria Housing Strategy would be the County's Strategic Housing document to sit beneath the group, covering all housing related issues and the expert groups would sit beneath. The Supported housing & homelessness expert group would be the delivery forum for supported housing actions, rather than needing a separate Supporting People strategy.

