

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 October 2012

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jon Downie; Reg
Heathcote and Paul Whalley

Officers: Laurie Priebe, Housing Services Manager; Debbie Cochrane, Housing
Policy Manager; Denise James, Member Services Officer

SH 14/12 Chairmans Comments

Prior to the commencement of items on the Agenda the Chairman thanked
Members for attending the meeting at short notice.

The Panel noted that Laurie Priebe, Housing Services Manager, would be
leaving the Council in December and thanked him for all his hard work and
for making a vast difference to the housing department in what had been
difficult times.

It was noted that Debbie Cochrane would be taking up her new position as
Housing Services Manager from 1 November and Members wished her well.

It was further noted that Kate Skillicorn, Housing Research and Policy Officer,
would also be leaving the Council and Members asked for their thanks to be
given to her for all her hard work during her employment with the Council.

SH 15/12 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2012 be
signed by the chairman as a correct record subject to Minute SH 09/12 (b)
being amended to “ the Strategic Housing Panel support the seeking of
accreditation of the Council’s in-house service as a Home Improvement
Agency.”

SH 16/12 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Peter Stephenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda
items 6 – Tenancy Strategy due to being a tenant and 9 - Government White
Paper due to having a partner employed by Cumbria County Council.

SH 17/12 A Tenancy Strategy for Copeland

Consideration was given to the revised Tenancy Strategy for Copeland 2013-2015 following the full consultation process prior to submission to the Executive and Council for approval.

Members asked that in future the Lead Officer should be present at the meeting to present their reports.

Under the Council's Expectations of Registered Providers for Fixed Term Tenancies (paragraph 5.1 of the strategy) Members asked for the word "will" to be replaced by "may" – "exceptions may be made for specialised schemes like Living Over the Shop or Housing Associations as Managing Agents where the provider is committed to shorter term leased from owners"

Members also felt that these exceptions should be a minimum of 12 months.

It was noted that prior to being submitted to the Executive and Council paragraphs would be added to the strategy on the proposed monitoring process for managing the outcomes of expectation of the providers and also equality impact issues. Members felt that monitoring report should be submitted to the Panel annually.

RESOLVED – That subject to the amendments detailed above the Executive be recommended to recommend the proposed Copeland Tenancy Strategy to Council for adoption.

During the discussion on the proposed Strategy expressed concern over vulnerable people who are tenants not being fully aware of the changes to benefits, bedroom tax and under occupancy and it was

AGREED – That a report would be submitted to the December meeting of the Panel on under occupation in properties.

Members also asked for an update following the recent flooding on what the current position was with regard to tenants and what had been learned including what policies were now in place should it happen again. It was

AGREED – That the Housing Services Manger take Members concerns to the providers via the Welfare Sub Group of the Flood Recovery Coordination Group.

SH 18/12 Review of Cumbria Choice

Consideration was given to the revised Allocations Policy and Accessibility Policy as drawn up by The Cumbria Choice Project Board.

During consideration of this item Members asked for further briefing/update sessions on Choice Based Lettings and the Welfare Reform act and it was noted that these were to be arranged in January 2013.

RESOLVED – That a) the Council continues to discharge homelessness duties into the private sector only if customers choose;

b) the Executive be recommended to recommend the revised allocations Policy to Council for approval; and

c) subject to approval of (a) above a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive recommending a programme of Copeland specific consultations on discretions which include Quotas; Local Connections; Local Lettings Policies; Household type and property size and Rurality.

SH 19/12 Performance Monitoring Report

A report was submitted and noted on the performance of operational Activity for the first half of 2012.

SH 20/12 Caring For Our Future

A report was submitted and noted on a housing-specific extract from the Government’s White Paper on the future of care and support services published in July 2012 titles “Caring for Our Future” prior to a full report being submitted on the prospects of Home Improvement Agency services in Copeland.

The meeting closed at 12:15pm

Chairman

Date