

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2012 at 10:00am**

Present: Councillors George Clements (Chairman); Jon Downie;  
Reg Heathcote; Alan Jacob; Sam Pollen and Paul Whalley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Stephenson.

Officers: Laurie Priebe, Housing Services Manager; Debbie Cochrane, Housing Policy Manager; Kate Skillicorn, Housing Research and Policy Officer; and Clive Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy; Kate Smith, Housing Renewal Officer and Charles Wilcock, Housing Technical Officer (for item 6 only).

Also present: Robert Cornwall, Cumbria Disabled Facilities Grants Co-ordinator and Roy McNally, Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies (for item 6 only).

Andrea Thorne, Home Group (for items 8 and 9 only).

#### **SH 06/12 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2012 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **SH 07/12 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Paul Whalley declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda items 8 and 9 due to being a tenant of Home Group.

#### **SH 08/12 Order of Agenda Items**

With the permission of the Chair, it was

**RESOLVED** – That an additional item (Item 10 Copeland Housing Strategy – Year 2 Action Plan Monitoring Report by Exception) be added to the agenda.

#### **SH 09/12 Accreditation as a Home Improvement Agency**

The Housing Services Manager provided Members with some background to Disabled Facilities Grants prior to introducing Robert Cornwall, Cumbria Disabled Facilities Grants Co-ordinator and Roy McNally, Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies who presented to the Panel.

Mr Cornwall provided an overview of the Disabled Facilities Grant Integration Project and outlined the benefits of applying for accreditation with Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies.

Mr McNally continued by outlining additional services that could also be looked at (eg Handy Person services, Affordable Loans through Credit Union and Gardening Services)

Members were then provided with an opportunity to ask questions, which included the cost, resources, timescales and the position of other Councils within Cumbria.

In light of the report and additional knowledge gained during the discussion the Strategic Housing Services Manager recommended that the Strategic Housing Panel support in principle the seeking of accreditation of the Council's in-house service as a Home Improvement Agency.

**RESOLVED – That**

- a) the presentations from Robert Cornwall and Roy McNally be received,
- b) the Strategic Housing Panel support in principle the seeking of accreditation of the Council's in-house service as a Home Improvement Agency.

#### **SH 10/12 A Draft Tenancy Strategy for Copeland**

The Housing Services Manager the draft Tenancy Strategy for Copeland 2013-2015 to members and advised that the Council was obliged to consult all registered providers in the District prior to publishing its final strategy. The proposed timescales were also highlighted with the aim of publishing the final Tenancy Strategy in January 2013.

During the discussion that followed, it was suggested that the draft be circulated to the wider voluntary sector.

Members were also advised that it was proposed to bring a revised document with recommendations to the October meeting of this Panel.

**RESOLVED – That**

- a) the draft Tenancy Strategy for Copeland 2013-2015 be approved for consultation with a closing date of 28 September 2012,
- b) the consultation be extended to include the wider voluntary sector, and
- c) the revised Tenancy Strategy 2013-2015 with recommendations be brought to the October meeting of this Panel.

**SH 11/12 Home Group Void Management**

Andrea Thorne, Home Group, updated Members on the current performance of managing empty homes in the Copeland Borough Council area, as per the report shown as Item 8 of the agenda.

This was followed by a brief question and answer session.

Ms Thorne was thanked for her report.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted

**SH 12/12 Home Group and Affordable Rents**

Andrea Thorne, Home Group, then updated Members regarding Affordable Rents as per the report shown as Item 8 of the agenda.

This was followed by a brief question and answer session.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted

**SH 13/12 Copeland Housing Strategy – Year 2 Action Plan Monitoring Report by Exception**

The Housing Policy Manager provided an overview of the Copeland Housing Strategy – Year 2 Action Plan Monitoring Report by Exception and highlighted two areas which were not ‘green’.

These were sections 2.2.1 ‘Private Sector Stock Condition – Copeland Housing Partnership to analyse findings of report and review implications for Strategy Delivery Plan’ and 3.2.1 ‘Establish officer and partner task & finish group to oversee the statutory review of homelessness in the borough.’

**RESOLVED** – That the monitoring report and the two slippage items which have revised deadlines for activity in line with team capacity, be noted.

The meeting closed at 12:10pm

Chairman .....

Date .....