

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2014 at 2:00pm

Present: Councillors George Clements (Chairman); John Bowman;
Reg Heathcote; Lena Hogg and Peter Stephenson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Whalley.

Officers: Debbie Cochrane, Housing Services Manager; Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy and Clive Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

SH 21/13 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH 22/13 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Peter Stephenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in all Agenda items which referred to Home Group due to being a Home Group tenant.

SH 23/13 Local Letting Policy

Members were provided with a brief history of the Local Letting Policy which was introduced in 2012 due to the lack of 2 bedroom properties in the Egremont area. Following the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act in April 2013, there are now a significant number of customers in the Egremont area who may be in financial hardship as they try to meet the requirement of the increased rent charge.

Following a discussion, it was suggested that the Local Letting Policy be suspended for a period of 18 months.

The Panel also expected Home Group to undertake a Financial check of customers prior to letting.

RESOLVED – That a recommendation be made to the Executive to suspend the Local Letting Policy for a period of 18 months.

SH 24/13 Better Care Fund

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with details of the Health and Social Care Integration Transformation fund (ITF), which has been changed and will now be known as the Better Care Fund.

A Local Plan has been written and will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval, prior to submission to Government by 4 April 2014.

The Plan outlines how performance will be improved in the following areas;

- Reduce hospital admissions
- Reduce admissions to residential and nursing care
- Improve quality of life for patients and carers
- Reduce delayed transfers of care
- Improve reablement/rehabilitation
- More to die at home
- More use of personal budgets

Members were advised that the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation for Copeland for 2014/15 was £276,312 and for 2015/16 would be £351,000 and that the funding for 2015/16 may be in tranches. From 2016 the allocations to Local Authorities will be made by Cumbria County Council, the allocation methodology is yet to be determined.

When Disabled Facilities Grants are given, the improved criteria would be noted and kept as evidence.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SH 25/13 Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge For Homelessness Services

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with details with an update on the Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness Services and discussed the Action Plan.

Members were advised that a Peer Review was planned to take place before the end of the current financial year and that an update would be provided to this Panel at the September meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Gold Standard Action Plan be approved and the Strategic Housing Panel monitor progress.

SH 26/13 Repossessions Prevention Toolkit

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with details of the Repossessions Prevention Toolkit, which after discussion, Members recommended be forwarded to the Executive for approval.

RESOLVED – That the Repossessions Prevention Toolkit be recommended to Executive for approval.

SH 27/13 Copeland Housing Strategy 2011-15 - Delivery Plan Years 3 & 4

The Panel considered the Copeland Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015.

During discussion, Members enquired regarding the amount of furniture that needed to be in a property for it to be classed as occupied.

A request was made for Cumbria Choice to be added.

Members thanked the Housing Services Manager and her team for the hard work they are doing.

RESOLVED – That the Copeland Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015 be updated as agreed.

SH 28/13 Vote of Thanks

As this was the last Strategic Housing Panel meeting for the Chairman Councillor George Clements, Members and Officers thanked him for the hard work and commitment he has demonstrated over the years.

The meeting closed at 3:30pm

Chairman

Date