

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2013 at 2:00pm

Present: Councillors George Clements (Chairman); John Bowman; Reg Heathcote; Lena Hogg; Alan Jacob 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.

Also present: Andrea Smith, Cumbria County Council and Jo Radcliffe, Age UK.

SH 01/13 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH 02/13 Order of Agenda

With the permission of the Chairman, It was agreed that an additional Agenda Item 7 would be taken before first, being a presentation on Homeshare.

SH 03/13 Homeshare.

Members received a presentation on Homeshare from Andrea Smith, Cumbria County Council and Jo Radcliffe, Age UK.

The Homeshare scheme was designed to support someone who needs a small amount of help to live independently in their own home by matching with someone who has a housing need and can provide that support or companionship.

The scheme arranges the matching process between the Householder and the Homesharer, typically a younger student or key public service worker who cannot afford housing. Usually no rent is charged, but the household bills are shared and in return the Homesharer will help out around the house.

The Panel were then provided with an outline of the application process, which included qualification criteria, reference checks and interviews.

Andrea Smith and Jo Radcliffe were thanked for their presentation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

SH 04/13 Review of Services for Vulnerable 16/17 year olds in Copeland.

The Panel was advised that over the coming months, every Local Authority in Cumbria would be reviewing the services available for young people within their district.

It was stated that the Cumbria Housing Executive Group (CHEG) had agreed that a successful outcome for a young person would be:- ‘A young person who is vulnerable, homeless and 16-17 years old will receive an efficient and seamless service which results in a successful outcome for them. That successful outcome will be to be settled in independent and sustainable housing.’

RESOLVED – That

- a) The report be noted, and
- b) Progress reports be made on a regular basis to the Strategic Housing Panel.

SH 05/13 Supporting People – Central Access Point Review Report.

The Housing Services Manager introduced this item to Members by stating that the implementation of a Central Access Point (CAP) was approved by the Supporting People Commissioning Body in 2011.

The purpose of CAP was to ensure the following:-

- The most vulnerable in the community in need of housing related support are able to access services
- That a single pathway to housing support services is in place
- Housing Support services are tailored to the individual and the most appropriate service is accessed based upon need and risk
- The Supporting People resource is managed effectively and efficiently
- That numbers of individuals that accessed housing related support were recorded showing a true reflection of need
- That re-presentations will be recorded and monitored
- That strategic information will be collated regarding gaps in service when individuals are declined by providers

The CAP became an integral part of the newly tendered Supporting People contracts (April 2012).

RESOLVED – That

- a) The report be noted,
- b) Louise Elsworth-Barnes be invited to the next meeting of this Panel,
- c) A glossary of terms be provided for use in conjunction with the Supporting People Central Access Review report,
- d) the Strategic Housing Action Plan be updated accordingly.

SH 06/13 Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness Services.

The Housing Services Manager advised Members regarding the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS), which is a new service set up specifically to support local authorities to deliver early intervention and prevention housing options services and is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The NPSS has developed a 10 step continuous improvement approach starting with a pledge for local authorities aspiring to strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services and culminating in an application for the Gold Standard Challenge.

The 10 challenges are:-

- 1) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
- 2) To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
- 3) To offer a Housing Options prevention services to all clients including written advice
- 4) To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
- 5) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- 6) To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
- 7) To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- 8) To have a homeless strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
- 9) To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation
- 10) To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

By achieving the 10 challenges, local authorities would be demonstrating that they have comprehensive prevention services in place for all clients, both the statutorily and non-statutorily homeless.

During the discussion of this item, it was stated that the Housing Services team already meet many of the 10 challenges listed.

A request was made that the Housing Services Action Plan be updated accordingly.

The Housing Services Manager was asked to pass on the thanks of the Panel to the Housing Services team for the splendid work they are doing.

RESOLVED – That

- a) the Strategic Housing Panel supports the Housing Options team in the process to achieving the Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness Services, and
- b) the Strategic Housing Action Plan be updated accordingly.

SH 07/13 Welfare Reform.

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with a verbal update on Welfare Reform.

Details comparing the number of Discretionary Housing Payments processed in 2012 against 2013 was also circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

The meeting closed at 3:45pm

Chairman

Date