

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2013 at 10:00am**

Present: Councillors George Clements (Chairman); Reg Heathcote; Lena Hogg; Alan Jacob; Peter Stephenson and Paul Whalley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Bowman.

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

Also present: Councillor Graham Sunderland; Neil Morland, Housing Consultant; Louise Barkes, Home Group (for Item 8) and Rachel Holliday, Time To Change West Cumbria (for Item 10).

#### **SH 08/13 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **SH 09/12 Order of Agenda**

It was agreed that Agenda Item 8 would be taken before Item 7.

#### **SH 10/13 Confirmation of Board Members for Home Group**

Members were invited to make two appointments from the Panel of Board Members for Home Group

**RESOLVED** – That Councillors Lena Hogg and Alan Jacob be appointed as Board Members for Home Group

#### **SH 11/13 Home Group Update on Voids/Repairs and Local Lettings Policy**

Louise Barkes, Home Group, provided a verbal update to members on the position regarding Home Group Voids and Repairs within the Copeland area.

It was reported that there were currently 197 void properties. Approximately 100 of these were with Willmot Dixon for repair.

The Housing Services Manager would be provided with details of the voids for forwarding to Panel Members.

With regards general repairs, there were approximately 1500 properties per month requiring repair and 98% of these jobs were completed within timescale.

Members were requested to consider the Local Lettings Policy. Currently through Cumbria Choice applicants are asked in week 1 to only apply for a property if they can fully occupy it. In week 2 applicants are permitted to under occupy by one bedroom, subject to an Income/Expenditure check. In week 3, there is open bidding, subject to an Income/Expenditure check.

During the discussion that followed, Members suggested that a special meeting to discuss the Local Lettings Policy would be the way forward and that all Egremont ward councillors be invited to attend. Prior to the special meeting, Home Group would also prepare a one page summary of the issues to be covered.

Louise was thanked for her attendance and for providing the update.

**RESOLVED** – That

- a) the update on Voids/Repairs be noted, and
- b) a special meeting of this Panel be arranged to discuss the Local Lettings Policy, with all Egremont ward councillors invited to attend.

### **SH 12/13 Discretionary Housing Payments**

The Panel received a verbal update on Discretionary Housing Payments from the Housing Services Manager.

It was stated that the current criteria for discretionary payments was too strict resulting in few payments being made.

The Panel was advised that application forms for Discretionary Housing Payments were available from the Reception desk at the Copeland Centre and it was suggested that these be made available to Town and Parish councils and Libraries within the borough.

A further update would be given at a future meeting of this Panel.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

### **SH 13/13 Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018**

The Housing Services Manager provided the Panel with an overview of the Copeland Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

It was stated that under the Homelessness Act 2002, every local authority must have a homelessness strategy for the purpose of coordinating activities and resources for tackling homelessness and that this be reviewed every five years.

The Copeland strategy would focus equally on tackling all forms of homelessness including

- Statutory Homelessness
- Homeless families
- Single Homelessness
- Hidden Homelessness

At this point Neil Morland, Housing Consultant, presented the Copeland Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 to the Panel.

A question and answer session followed and a number of suggestions/comments were made, including the use of the private sector.

Members were asked to forward any additional comments to either the Housing Services Manager or the Head of Development Strategy.

**RESOLVED** – That

- a) the presentation be received,
- b) the use of the Private Sector be discussed further and that this be included as an item for the special meeting, and
- c) the Chairman and Housing Services Manager be granted delegated authority to make changes to the Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 prior to it being forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

### **SH 14/13 Proposed Homeless Hostel Accommodation in Copeland**

The Panel received a presentation on a proposed Homeless Hostel accommodation in Copeland from Rachel Holliday, Time to Change West Cumbria. Members were advised that the aim of the project was to take a broad approach to working with homeless people, not just providing them with a roof over their heads, but encouraging them to develop life skills through volunteering, contributing to the management of the hostel and being more active in managing their lives.

There followed a question and answer session.

Members were provided with a website address [www.ttcwestcumbria.org](http://www.ttcwestcumbria.org) where further details were available.

Rachel was thanked for her presentation and members were advised that further updates would be brought to future meetings.

**RESOLVED** – That the presentation be noted.

The meeting closed at 12:10pm

Chairman .....

Date .....