

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 2:00pm

Present: Councillors John Bowman; Geoff Garrity; Alan Jacob; Peter Stephenson and Paul Whalley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Reg Heathcote; Lena Hogg.

Officers: Julie Betteridge, Head of Customer and Community Services; Jessica Hall, Senior Housing Options Advisor and Clive Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

Also Present: Mr Michael Bullock, Director ARC4.

SH 10/14 Appointment of Chairman

Due to the absence of the Chair, it was moved by Councillor Paul Whalley, duly seconded and

RESOLVED - That that Councillor Geoff Garrity be appointed Chair for this meeting of the Strategic Housing Panel.

SH 11/14 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH 12/14 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 13/14 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Refresh 2014

Members were reminded that the Council undertook a full borough-wide housing survey in 2009/10 and published its Strategic Housing Market Assessment based on the survey evidence in 2010.

A refresh of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is required every 4-5 years.

The refresh was currently being undertaken and would include Updating baseline housing needs and affordable housing requirements; Reviewing the general strategic housing market context and emerging issues; and Stakeholder consultation with partners and using existing partnership routes

specifically the Copeland Housing Partnership and the Copeland Partnership framework.

The Panel then received a presentation from Mr Michael Bullock, Director at ARC4, followed by a question and answer session.

It was stated that the final version of the report would be circulated to Members by email.

RESOLVED – That the update and presentation be received and noted.

SH 14/14 Benchmarking for Homelessness Functions

Members received a report on Temporary Accommodation Benchmarking, which highlighted the reduction in the use of temporary accommodation. It was also highlighted that Copeland had the biggest reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation when compared to the other five Cumbrian authorities.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SH 15/14 Homelessness Prevention

The Senior Housing Options Advisor presented a Homelessness Prevention Update to Members.

Members were advised that the Council employs a number of homelessness prevention methods which Housing Options advisors apply in their everyday casework.

These include:

- General advice and assistance to those threatened with homelessness;
- the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- The Landlord Forum for Private Sector Landlords in Copeland;
- Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Banding under the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme;
- Mediation and Negotiation;
- Signposting to Floating Support Services;
- The Homelessness Prevention Fund;
- The Repossession Prevention Fund;
- Identifying and Resolving housing benefit issues and supporting people with applications;
- Supporting people with Discretionary Housing Payment applications;
- Unfit properties and working with Landlords to improve their condition for tenants and taking action where necessary;
- Signposting to debt advice services and agencies;
- Support for the Sanctuary Scheme

RESOLVED – That the report and the Homelessness Prevention Work Programme be noted.

SH 16/14 Welfare Reform Headlines

The Panel received a report with headlines taken from the fourth of six scheduled reports examining how households are responding to the changes associated with welfare reform and whether the reforms are achieving their ambition of getting people into work and reducing public spending.

The headlines related to research carried out during April and May 2014 and relate to household across the North of England:-

- 24% of people in debt owe money to a Pay Day Lender or Loan Shark.
- 43.5% of people in debt will take more than 4 years to repay their debts or don't know when they will be paid off.
- The percentage of in-debt households owing more than £2000 has risen to 52.8% (from 44% in the last report Jan to March 2014).
- Average weekly debt repayments have more than doubled to £37.36 per week (from £18.21 nine months ago).
- 12.5% have used a food bank at least once in the last three months.
- Weekly spending on fuel is 9.1% higher than at the start of the study (April 2013), with an average spend of £28.37 per week.
- Spend per person per day on fuel has increased to £4.05 from £1.97 in September 2013.
- Spend on food per person per day has reduced to £2.79 from £3.28 in September 2013.
- 3 out of 10 households spend less than £20 per week on food.
- Average money left after bills has increased slightly but at £2.82 per day across all of the households is not proving to be sufficient to cope with unexpected expenditure.
- There has been a 29% reduction in money left each week after bills for those in full time employment. They now have an average of £46.43 left each week after bills.
- Unemployed households have got poorer. With £10.32 per week, or £1.47 per day, left after bills, this is a 17% reduction since the start of the study.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 3:55pm

Chairman

Date