

STRATEGIC HOUSING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2010

Present: Councillors P Whalley (Deputy Chairman in the Chair); A Jacob; J Jackson; R Pitt and G Sunderland.

Officers: J Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy; L Priebe, Housing Services Manager; D Cochrane, Housing Policy Manager; A Davis, Housing Strategy Manager and C Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

Apologies for absence: Councillors J Bowman and G Clements.

Also Present: Denise Waller, Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (for Item 6 only) and Andrea Thorn, Home Group (for Items 9 and 10 only).

SH 79 Minutes of the Meetings held on 9 March 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2010 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to Councillor Whalley being shown as declaring a Personal Interest due to being a tenant of Copeland Homes.

SH 80 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Whalley declared a Personal Interest in the agenda items due to being a tenant of Copeland Homes.

SH 81 Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Members received an overview of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme from Denise Waller.

The Panel was advised that 260 Local Authorities currently offer Choice Based Lettings and 57 further schemes were being developed.

The Cumbria wide scheme has a 'Go Live' date of January 2011.

Members were advised that the scheme would use a Web Based Computer system on which properties would be advertised. Customers would be involved at an early stage and a 'Banding' system would prioritise applicants. Within the band, the date of registration would be used to determine the prioritisation. This allows for one common housing register and one allocation policy, thus making the scheme transparent and fair to customers.

Members were further advised of the Bands to be used.

Band A – would be for those with an Urgent need for Housing, eg: Statutory Homeless, Statutory Overcrowded, those suffering from domestic violence or severe harassment, those with medical needs, those in unsanitary conditions, those in properties to be demolished or to be improved in a regeneration area.

Band B - for those with a High need for Housing, eg: Applicants in supported housing, those in under occupation by two or more bedrooms, Applicants with a cumulative need (two or more needs from Band C).

Band C - for those with a Medium need for Housing, eg: Applicants who are homeless but with no priority need or the intentionally homeless. Those in private rented accommodation with a notice to quit, care leavers, applicants being harassed, suffering hardship, those in unsuitable accommodation.

Band D – for those with a Low need for housing, eg: Applicants with a low need for housing or inadequately housed.

During the question and answer session that followed, Members asked why the number of bedrooms was used in determining under occupancy. It was also asked where Prisoners fit in to the process. Members asked regarding mutual exchange and were advised that the scheme would continue. ICT requirements were questioned and Members were advised that a visit to the preferred ICT supplier was arranged for the end of April and feedback would be given to this Panel after that time.

Ms Waller was thanked for her presentation.

At this point the Panel considered the Draft Legal Partnering Agreement relating to arrangements to implement a sub-regional choice based letting scheme in Cumbria. It was suggested that, due to the draft agreement requiring clarification and completion, it be brought back to this Panel before being referred to the Executive with a recommendation.

RESOLVED - That the Draft Legal Partnering Agreement relating to arrangements to implement a sub-regional choice based letting scheme in Cumbria be clarified/completed then brought back to this Panel for a recommendation before going to the Executive.

SH 82 Capital Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants

Members considered the report from the Housing Services Manager on Capital Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants.

During discussion of this item, Members were advised that there would be minimal impact on waiting times regarding Disabled Facilities Grants.

RESOLVED - That the report on Capital Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants be noted.

SH 83 Housing Needs Survey

Members considered the report from the Housing Services Manager on the specification of the Housing Needs Survey 2010

Members were advised that tenders had been invited to conduct the Housing Needs Survey, the closing date for which was 13 April 2010. It was hoped to approve the tender this week and for the survey to be completed by the Autumn 2010.

RESOLVED - That the report on the specification of the Housing Needs Survey 2010 be noted.

SH 84 Home Group Voids Update

Andrea Thorn, Home Group, provided the Panel with an update on Home Group's void properties.

Members asked for a further split of void property figures to be provided.

The Panel was advised that the Housing Policy Manager had joined Home Group's Void Property Project Team and will be reporting back to this Panel in due course. It was requested that this be done quarterly.

RESOLVED - That

- a) the update on the Home Group's void properties be received, and
- b) update reports be made quarterly to this Panel.

SH 85 Home Housing Group Service Charging

Members considered correspondence between the Housing Services Manager and Home Northwest regarding the Home Housing Group's Service Charging.

RESOLVED - That the correspondence be noted.

SH 86 Any Other Business

Members requested clarification regarding a property's change of use to a House of Multiple Occupation and whether Planning permission was required.

RESOLVED - That the Housing Policy Manager provide Members with the clarification on writing.

SH 87 Chairman's Closing Remarks

As this was the last meeting of this Panel in the current municipal year, the Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their hard work and support over the past year.

The meeting closed at 1:10 pm

Chairman

Date