

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD
REGIONAL HOUSING AND REGENERATION BOARD**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON
1 DECEMBER 2009**

INSTITUTE OF MATERIALS, LONDON



Present:

Board Members

Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright	East Hampshire CC (Chairman)
David Edwards	HCA
Howard Ewing	GOSE
Imtiaz Farookhi	SEEDA
Cllr Richard Gates	Waverley BC
Cllr Angela Lawrence	Vale of White Horse DC
Cllr Sue Nicholas	Dover DC
Martin Nurse	Social stakeholder
Cllr Tony Reid	East Sussex CC
Cllr Nick Rose	Chiltern DC
Cllr James Swindlehurst	Slough BC

Officers

Paul Abey	HCA
Lee Amor	SEEDA
Jane Lawrence	Partnership Board
Martin Tugwell	Partnership Board
Louise Wilby	Partnership Board
Chris Woolf	GOSE

1. Apologies, Substitutes and Declaration of Interests

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Alison Bailey, Graeme Hough, Charles Lant, Ann Santry and Ed Turner.
- 1.2 The following substitutes were declared: Martin Nurse for Ann Santry and Cllr James Swindlehurst for Cllr Ed Turner.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 8 September 2009

- 2.1 The Minutes were **AGREED** with no amendments.

3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

- 3.1 It was **AGREED** that papers will be circulated 10 days before the meeting.
- 3.2 The Board **NOTED** the response by John Healey, dated 29 October 2009, to the Chairman's letter of 26 August 2009 regarding the proposed Developing Guidance for Local Authorities on Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategic Housing Market Assessments.

4. Board Business Plan: To agree work priorities for the forthcoming year

- 4.1 Jane Lawrence provided the context for her report and invited the Board to comment.
- 4.2 Lee Amor emphasised the importance of identifying key issues and the leverage of private sector funding and finance from other sources. He referred to SEEDA's commissioned report 'Beyond the Credit Crunch' which

brings together ideas from a number of organisations about the way forward.

- 4.3 Howard Ewing also welcomed the report but thought it over ambitious. He suggested prioritising the five key themes to reflect the wider remit of the Board. He referred to Paul Carter's view, at the last Partnership Board meeting, that a whole market approach was needed.
- 4.4 Angela Lawrence reported the resistance of rural settlements to affordable housing since the demise of the Rural Housing Enablers. The Chairman reported that Hampshire County Council part funded this in East Hampshire.
- 4.5 Imtiaz Farookhi highlighted the importance of clarity about strategic responsibility, sources of funding and barriers to delivery. He suggested considering giving the most pressing priority to that which will only be delivered through the intervention of the Board. The desirability of a website link to the Single Conversation was noted.
- 4.6 Jane Lawrence recommended publishing details of all projects in a similar format to that published by the Regional Transport Board (RTB). She suggested that the first priority should be to set up a single Task and Finish Group to identify delivery strategies and measurable outcomes for affordable housing.
- 4.7 The challenge of addressing specific issues relating to the young, single homeless was noted. Jane Lawrence will review previous work prior to correlating the work of different bodies.
- 4.8 The Chairman suggested that an alternative to sheltered housing for the ageing population was a growing need.
- 4.9 Martin Tugwell reported on headlines on total housing completions from the Annual Monitoring Report indicated a reduction from the previous year from 35,400 to 32,300. The report included information about the performance of individual authorities. The Board may therefore wish to consider how to address the shortfall in the context of the recession's likely impact on future delivery.
- 4.10 A revised Business Plan will be presented to the next Board meeting on 9 March 2010.

The Board APPROVED the proposed business plan presented in Annex 1 subject to the changes discussed by the Board being included.

5. Rural Housing: To discuss the role of the Board in providing leadership on improving delivery

- 5.1 Jane Lawrence introduced the report.
- 5.2 Howard Ewing advised that two recent Government consultations had just been published; Guidance for local authorities on incentivising landowners and the Rural Masterplan. He encouraged the Board to respond to the former consultation which will close on 18 February 2010. The Rural Masterplan made £1m available. The closing date for bids is 15 January 2010.

- 5.3 Richard Gates noted that the requirement to build more homes had acted as a disincentive to landowners to use the Exceptions Policy. He asked whether more could be done to encourage housing associations to be more robust in working with parish councils to gain the support of the local community.
- 5.4 It was noted that it was taking longer for schemes to progress through the planning system and lowering thresholds for affordable housing was suggested as helpful. Availability of land was also a barrier. Concern was expressed about spurious schemes for village greens and ways to overcome this barrier. The latter issue had been raised by the Chairman with Jonathan Shaw, MP. Howard Ewing advised that GOSE was pressing CLG for clarity on the matter.
- 5.5 David Edwards reported that HCA was giving urgent consideration to developing a cohesive approach, based on previous good practice to encourage potential providers of affordable housing. He believed it was important to seek support from parish councils.
- 5.6 Lee Amor supported a rural summit to rationalise the rural agenda and consider the skills required to support delivery. He indicated that links should be made with the Regional Economic Development and Skills Board and the Regional Strategy in order to benchmark and identify opportunities for adding value.
- 5.7 Martin Tugwell emphasised the importance of delivering housing in the broader rural economy. He suggested drawing up a shortlist of key people to be invited to a regional summit for the purpose of deciding regional priorities and giving consideration to the cohesive approach being developed by HCA and the work of the Rural Board.
- 5.8 The following points were made in the ensuing discussion:
- Organise a spring summit to provide a more balanced picture of a gradually improving housing market
 - Invite house builders and other delivery partners
 - Involvement of Hampshire Alliance for Affordable Rural Housing
 - Consider the Local Government Association's publication, 'Rural housing signposts: The path to better delivery of affordable rural housing'
 - Ensure a rural dimension link with the Regional Development Plan, Regional Strategy and Comprehensive Spending Review discussions
 - Working with the South West and East Regions to share benchmarking and good practice

The Board AGREED four key areas where the Board can provide a leadership role supporting improvements in the delivery of affordable rural housing.

- 1. Partnership Board to organise a Rural Housing Summit;**
- 2. Explicit linkage with the Economic, Development and Skills Board and the Regional Skills Strategy;**
- 3. Consideration of examples of benchmarking and good practice *with the South West and East Regions, and***
- 4. Linkage with the Regional Strategy.**

6. London Plan: To agree consultation response

- 6.1 Jane Lawrence explained the London Plan will offer high level strategic recommendations and reported that consultation on the plan will be circulated to the Board before the deadline of 12 January 2010. The response will be incorporated into a single response from the Partnership Board.
- 6.2 She noted that the Board had discussed the London Strategy at its meeting on 23 June 2009. The Strategy was scheduled for publication in early 2010. She noted that ordinarily the plan should have been published before the strategy. She also noted discussions which had taken place about the inter-regional connection with the Seaside and Counties Project and advised that progress on this would be monitored.

The Board NOTED the verbal update.

7. Private Sector Renewal Programme 2010-11 Allocation Recommendations

- 7.1 Chris Woolf provided the context for the report and invited comments.
- 7.2 Responding to a question he explained that the size of reduction for each authority depended on what had been delivered and the speed at which committed allocations had been spent. He further explained that East Kent's allocation represented a large carry over from the previous year rather than an overspend.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- 7.3 Cllr Sue Nicholas commended the programme as a way of recycling funding and improving existing stock.
- 7.4 Cllr James Swindlehurst asked about whether the programme was sufficiently flexible to address social housing waiting lists and inspection of Houses in Multiple Occupation. Chris Woolf advised bringing these priorities to the Thames Valley Consortium to establish which funds could be used.
- 7.5 Imtiaz Farookhi advised that insulating existing stock to meet CO2 requirements will become increasingly important.
- 7.6 Howard Ewing confirmed that recycled funding is returned to the original consortium. However, GOSE is unable to specify how the recycled funding is used due to the way the scheme is set up.
- 7.7 In summary Martin Tugwell asked GOSE to provide lead authority contact details and double check whether recycled funds are ring fenced. He suggested the Board might like to reconsider its priorities for 2011 at its meeting on 9 March 2010. In the meanwhile the Partnership Board will provide the evidence base to argue the case for carbon reduction to better determine the impact on other areas of delivery.
- 7.8 A letter will be sent to CLG confirming the value of this funding emphasising 'recycling' and suggested priorities for post 2011.

The Board:

- a) **NOTED the contents of the report**

- b) **APPROVED the funding distribution recommendations for 2010-11 as set out in Section 2.**

8. South East Quarterly Housing Performance

a) Additional Performance Data

The Board AGREED that additional quarterly performance data can be included in future reports to the Board.

- 8a.1 Jane Lawrence introduced the report in the context of total housing delivery using the Partnership Board's Regional Monitoring Report, updated PSA 20 and the HCA's Monthly Housing Market Bulletin as the starting point for consideration of trends in the three months prior to Board meetings.
- 8a.2 Imtiaz Farookhi noted the encouraging figures for the third quarter but asked how much they were impacted by public sector intervention. He expressed concern about the long term affect of higher delivery costs, associated with higher standards, not being reflected in the cost of new build.
- 8a.3 David Edwards responded to a question about the variation between the increase in house prices as reported by Nationwide and Halifax on page 1 of the Monthly Housing Market Bulletin. This reflected the uncertainty of the market and valuers taking instruction from lenders. He acknowledged that higher delivery costs of new build will increase costs long term.

b) South East Quarterly Housing Performance: HCA Update on 2009/10 Programme Progress

- 8b.1 Paul Abey referred to page 6 of 7, para 2.6 on Gypsies and Travellers and advised that Ministerial approval if funding was expected on 31 December 2009. HCA will report to the Board on 9 March 2010.
- 8b.2 He confirmed that HCA will continue to work with the Partnership Board to further refine the format of the quarterly housing performance report to include additional information requested by the Board. The intention was to also produce a Housing Market Report, based on the HCA monthly bulletin. He invited the Board to comment on the report.
- 8b.3 The Chairman sought clarification about the confidence, expressed on page 3 of 7, that targets would be achieved for delivering affordable rented accommodation against shared ownership when planned targets for rented housing were shown to be not in line with targets in the table on page 2 of 7.
- 8b.4 Paul Abey explained that intermediate completions were boosted by the Open Market Homebuy Programme.
- 8b.5 David Edwards clarified the position with respect to Kickstart Funding being returned to HCA. Schemes have different proportions of grant, lending and equity. The pilot scheme in the South East has a mixture of each. As the scheme has progressed house builders have shown a preference for grants. He advised that 100% returns could not be guaranteed and it was difficult to be precise about when money would be returned.

- 8b.6 The Chairman was surprised that the local authority new build programme was expensive as local authorities were providing the land at no cost. David Edwards acknowledged the units were more costly. Local authorities were being encouraged to work with HCA to develop proficiency in procurement. The schemes provided some of the principles for future housing development with some limitations.
- 8b.7 Responding to a question about the Community Infrastructure Fund, David Edwards confirmed the CLG programme was being transferred to HCA for which English Partnership funding would be used. He confirmed that HCA does not have funding for infrastructure.
- 8b.8 Howard Ewing advised Members that the judicial review of the South East Hampshire Rapid Transit had failed and that the scheme would now go ahead. (Table on page 7 of 7)
- 8b.9 The Chairman asked how HCA proposed to resolve the issue of the Government's different affordable housing delivery targets for HCA and the Partnership Board.
- 8b.10 Martin Tugwell commented on the opportunities to progress the matter. He noted that the RHRB and the Partnership Board provided opportunities to simplify funding streams in the longer term through the submission to Ministers. In addition the Strategy Board, in considering how to develop the Regional Strategy and the Regional Development Plan, provided opportunities for achieving a single target. HCA and other Delivery Partners were observers on this Board.

The Board NOTED the following:

- 1. The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) excellent performance to the end of October in 2009/10 with regard to most of the key targets of the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP);**
 - 2. An update as to the current position on other key HCA programmes, notably the Property & Regeneration programme, Decent Homes progress, Gypsies and Travellers and Growth Areas and Growth Points and**
 - 3. The significant level of new funding issued by the HCA in the second quarter of 2009/10.**
- 9. Homes and Communities Agency: Proposed Working Arrangements**
- 9.1 Martin Tugwell explained the key driver to establish a starting point for the Single Conversation with HCA, taking account of how the Board wished to work with HCA and its business planning cycle. A written update will be reported to the Board on 9 March 2010.
- 9.2 David Edwards welcomed the report. HCA was on target with respect to allocations and distribution and consideration will be given to the Regional Funding Advice and the Regional Strategy.
- 9.3 He noted the different working arrangements of the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership (TGSP) and suggested that the Board may wish to consider delegating responsibility to TGSP.

The Board:

1. **AGREED** the approach set out in paragraph 4.4 should be used to form the basis of a discussion with the Homes and Communities Agency on the working arrangement for feeding into its business planning process;
2. **INSTRUCTED** the secretariat to explore with the Homes and Communities Agency the issues identified in paragraph 4.10 as part of that conversation;
3. **REQUESTED** a report on the outcome of those discussions at its next meeting.

10. Facilitating Affordable Housing Delivery: progress report on actions previously agreed by the Board

The Board NOTED:

1. The update provided on actions to date and,
2. Actions to be carried forward within the Business Plan agreed under item 4 on the agenda.

11. Items for Information:

11a) Private Sector Renewal programme 2009-10 Reserved Funding Recommendations – Outcome

The Board:

1. **NOTED** the contents of the report.
2. **INSTRUCTED** the Project Team to look into options for delivering an evaluation of the programme (para 3.3)

11b) Response to Growth Fund Consultation

The Board NOTED the response to the consultation.

11c) Support Arrangements: To report changes in arrangements (herewith)

The Board NOTED the contents of the report.

11d) Reform of Council Housing Finance

The Board NOTED the response to the consultation.

11e) Summary of Other Board Activity

11e.1 The Board welcomed and **NOTED** the Summary of Other Board Activity. Martin Tugwell suggested that this becomes a standard agenda item for all delivery boards.

11e.2 The press release and summary of the Housing, Planning and Delivery Grant will be circulated to Members.

The Board NOTED the contents of the report.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 The Partnership Board will investigate availability of venues to accommodate a 10.30 start for future meetings.
- 12.2 There being no other business the meeting closed at 16.10 hrs.
- 13. Date of Next Meeting: 10.30 on 9 March 2010 at the Institute of Materials, London**