

**Minutes of the  
CAMBRIDGE sUB-REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD (CRHB)  
held on Friday 4 July 2008**

**1. Introduction and Apologies**

**Present**

Liz Bisset (LB)	Cambridge City Council (Chair)
Dan Horne (DH)	Fenland District Council
Alan Carter (AC)	Cambridge City Council
Steve Plant (SP)	Huntingdonshire District Council
Stephen Hills (SH)	South Cambs District Council
Jane Hollingworth (JH)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Pete Wittall (PW)	Forest Heath District Council
Carol Herries (CH)	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
John Onslow (JO)	Cambridgeshire Horizons
Nigel Howlett (NH)	RSL representative
David Keeling (DK)	RSL representative
John O'Mahony (JOM)	Housing Corporation
Jo Webb (JW)	EERA
Kathy Brown (KJB)	Cambridge City Council (taking minutes)

**Apologies**

Sue Beecroft (SB)	Cambridgeshire Horizons
Trevor Baker (TB)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Tim Mills (TM)	Fenland District Council
Solma Ahmed (SA)	Go-East
Simon Phelan (SPH)	Forest Heath District Council
Frank Mastrandrea (FM)	Huntingdonshire District Council

**Action**

**2. Minutes of Last Meeting/Matters Arising**

- Agreed as an accurate record.
- Dan Horne has replaced Tim Mills as CRHB representative from Fenland.
- Resource for collecting CYPP indicators – TB to bring back a recommendation to the next meeting. **TB**
- Housing Options – we have been unsuccessful in the bid for extra funds, but will automatically go through to the next level to secure funding. AC will seek feedback and establish what this actually means.
- Review of rent system – JO'M will investigate and feedback the implications of this for RSLs. **JO'M**
- Housing Protocol – will come to the next Board. Circulate well in advance of the next meeting to allow adequate time to read the document. **JO'M/  
FM**

**3. Annual Monitoring Returns**

- Paper circulated showing the percentage of affordable housing completions.
- Waiting for the percentages to work through but there is no lack of commitment to achieve targets.
- The HC is using this monitoring to target particularly poor performing LAs to see if there is any additional help which they can provide. This is not relevant to the Cambridge sub-region.
- Cambridge is one of the highest performing sub-regions.
- EERA Annual Monitoring Report (available from the website) shows a split

by sub-region, and where the figures originated.

#### **4. Sub-Regional Response to Current Market Conditions**

- Fenland have more sites are coming through under the s106 threshold (15 units). The ground rent is higher to reflect a smaller site. These would never normally come forward under normal market conditions. The HC responded that the grant rate is an average - some come in above, some below – but all are judged on deliverability, quality, VFM and strategic fit.
- Sites should not only be thought about in terms of housing, but particularly with regard to community cohesion. The HC are aware of this and are keen to avoid problems for the future.
- House building is imploding at the moment. DK made the following points which could possibly help the situation:
  - Supporting intermediate rent and then convert to sale when the market improves.
  - Continuous Market Engagement – essential for HC to respond quickly; grant rates – if looking to substitute S106.
  - HCA suggested putting some of their money into a gap funding model which EP have been using successfully.
  - Message for LAs to help the situation – re strategic S106, to prevent mothballing, planning, clusters, brought forward, relocated to parts of sites where they are sustainable, more open mind on flexibility on mix of tenure.
- PW mentioned the empty properties on the Studlands estate, Newmarket.
- JH asked if there was any additional flexibility from the HC eg to offer more grant to enable tenants to purchase properties.
- SP suggested using second hand properties, eg purchase council properties.

#### **5. Sub-Regional Housing Strategy**

- In SB's absence this item was not discussed fully.
- SP reported that SB was slightly behind schedule. LB and JO to discuss how resource can be made available to help progress this.
- The Strategic Housing Group met on 3 July and felt that prioritisation was missing. The Group would look at this at their next meeting and feed back to CRHB in September.
- Allow 45 minutes to discuss this item at the August meeting and for CRHB representatives who are not able to attend, it was requested that a deputy was sent from their authority.
- Any immediate thoughts to be e-mailed to SB prior to the workshop (30 July) and the next CRHB.

#### **6. Housing Sustainability**

- Building regulations - if Govt serious, need to apply fairly to all sectors cost difference between level 3 and level 6.
- Lifestyle changes required too.
- Word of caution about applying what we see abroad to what we can apply here. High density vs units spread more widely.
- Experimentation projects! Code level 4 achievable preference to high density level 6.
- Emphasis is on new stock, however, carbon emissions coming from old stock which don't even meet level 1.
- NAHP – 12 level 6 schemes coming forward. Get lower level right for a large site as opposed to trying to get level 6 schemes.
- Need to be aware of climate change - flooding and heating – homes need

- to be designed to stay cool , not just about conserving energy.
- Look at existing stock, regional loans pot for private sector renewal.
- Bear in mind these discussions, what do we want to reflect when discussing our future strategy – ambition, risk of being at the cutting edge, balanced with delivering the broader agenda.

## 7. Publication of Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England

- Letter circulated. It can be found at [www.goeast.gov.uk](http://www.goeast.gov.uk).

## 8. SHMA Work Plan

- TB had circulated a briefing note and Gantt chart showing the proposed SHMA Work Plan.
- Any updates need to be clearly dated.
- The sub-regional planners group have formally written stating their concerns of the SHMA (e-mail circulated).
- It is difficult to predict need and we can only rely on surveys from Cambourne, etc and talk about generality and trends, as opposed to hard figures which is what the planners are asking for.
- SB and TB to draft a response to the Planners stating the limitations and why it is based on judgement rather than evidential hard figures.
- LB to circulate e-mail for information.

JO/  
SB/TB

LB

### Work Plan

- Agreed that two new areas of work will be: Older Peoples Housing, and Disabled People and Supporting People.
- Next year, consider looking more at primary research as opposed to having an annual update of every chapter.
- Consideration of additional data – from 6 month Home-Link, Hometrack data, (Land Registry data is 6 months out of date when it goes in, compared to Hometrack)

## 9. Election of Vice Chair for CRHB and Election of Sub-Regional Representative on RHAG

- Stephen Hills was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.
- SB had previously volunteered as CRHB representative on RHAG, if there were no others. This was agreed.

## 10. Work Plan

- Climate Change, Carbon Challenge (Peterborough Pilot) – when results out; urban drainage – October CRHB. DH to lead this
- Sub-Regional Homelessness Action Plan – update – to September CRHB. JH to ask for a speaker if appropriate
- Sub-regional housing strategy – discussion of strategic priorities – Main item at the August CRHB.
- Unsure what the Essex and North Norfolk pilots are on the work plan. SB to inform at next meeting.
- September meeting – older peoples focus – invite other relevant officers, including Kate Taylor, Housing & Health officer for PCT/SCDC.

DH

JH

SB/All

SB

KJB

## 11. Consultation Register

Nothing to report.

## 12.1 Cambridgeshire Horizons

- Hanley Grange Eco town – joint response to CLG consultation, strongly opposing it on grounds of location; it potentially undermines the existing strategy which is already a difficult agenda to deliver.

## 12.2 Housing Corporation

- Results of first RME round: Cambridge sub-region secured just under £7m, to deliver 175 homes, with 154 for rent. This gives a total sub-regional allocation from NAHP 08/11 of £34.5 million, delivering 1068 homes with a 77/23 tenure split in favour of rent (JOM will circulate a detailed report).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round of RME - bids shut on 23 July, going into RME Engagement - JOM will circulate announcements made end August/beginning September. Proforma out on 24 July with a tight, 5 working days turnaround.
- Tenant Services Authority – Peter Marsh has been appointed CEX. Other personnel have been announced/adverts closed. Update on working arrangements at the September or October CRHB.

## 12.3 Go-East

- No representative present.

## 12.4 Regional Housing Advisory Group

- No meeting held since the Board last met.

## 12.5 Sub-Regional Housing Association Meeting

- Currently discussing how housing management and the development group can work together to ensure a full range of input into CRHB.
- Sub-regional variable tariff system - NH will write back to Horizons, backing NHF national line, to ask that socially rented schemes be exempt from the tariff. Where developers are lead developers on schemes, the extra cost of the tariff won't make any difference; it will make a big difference where HAs are the lead developers and buy the land. How will this be met?

## 12.6 Cambridge Sub-Region Strategic Housing Group

- BME investment – HC have indicated that if LAs can demonstrate that they are meeting the needs of BME communities, they will allow the BME pot of money on general affordable housing. Question – what proportion on the waiting list have been housed over a 2 year period. Comments were made about the socio-economic differences in the BME community.
- Individuals would respond for their area, and Helen Reed would co-ordinate a response to feed back to CRHB.
- Homelessness Group – extensive work on process mapping and VFM on expenditure. They will to rerun the spreadsheet financial exercise with 2007/08 budgets and provide a commentary of differences. Little benefit was found in comparing urban with rural, if benchmarking takes place it should compare similar authorities. Housemark wish to extend their VFM from housing management to housing strategy.
- Housing Strategy Review – need for priorities.
- HIA review – out for consultation.
- Disability Housing Strategy – nobody is leading on this. Uncertain what will happen to this as no-one is driving the action plan. Consider this at the next Board. However, the Board had not agreed to adopted it but for use as a good practice guide.

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JH

## **12.7 CLIP Sub-Group**

- Europe wide survey of confidence in use of statistics. UK came 27 out of a total of 27 (the worst) in believing what the Government told them. The organisation has been renamed and will be more transparent with statistics on their website.
- They acknowledge that the collection of statistics is onerous and are reviewing to see which they require. A number of forms are being reviewed and receiving comments.
- National Register of social housing – trying to get everyone to complete. Difficult IT system.
- Looking at Decent Homes and discrepancies.

## **13 Any Other Business**

There was no AOB.

## **13 Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 10am, on Friday 1 August at Sanctuary Hereward Housing, St Mary's House, Ely.

Future dates:

5 September – ECDC

7 November - ECDC

3 October – Hereward Housing

5 December – Hereward Housing