

**Minutes of the
Cambridge sub-Regional Housing Board (CRHB)
held on Friday 1 May 2009**

1. Introduction and Apologies

Present

Steve Plant (SP)	Huntingdonshire District Council (Chairing)
Mike Knight (MK)	South Cambs District Council
Helen Reed (HR)	Cambridge City Council
Jane Hollingworth (JH)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Dan Horn (DH)	Fenland District Council
Steve Clark (SC)	Forest Heath District Council
Kim Langley	Forest Heath District Council)
Frank Mastrandrea (FM)	Huntingdonshire District Council
Niki Hollingworth (NH)	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Trevor Baker (TB)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Sue Beecroft (SB)	Cambridgeshire Horizons
Nigel Howlett (NH)	RSL representative
Colin Wiles (CW)	RSL representative
David Keeling (DK)	RSL representative
John Patterson	Ark Consultancy (Item 1)
Karen Wickham	Fenland District Council (Item 1)
Emma Grima	Fenland District Council (Item 1)
Marie Smith	Forest Heath District Council (Item 1)
Sue Dellar	Cambridge City Council (Item 1)
Sabrina Stockdale	Cambridge City Council (Item 1)
Julie Fletcher	South Cambridgeshire District Council (Item 1)
Keith Bowman	Cambridgeshire County Council (Item 2)
Geoff Hinkins	Cambridgeshire County Council (Item 2)
Kathy Brown (KJB)	Cambridge City Council (taking minutes)

Apologies

Liz Bisset (LB)	Cambridge City Council (Chair)
Alan Carter (AC)	Cambridge City Council
John Onslow (JO)	Cambridgeshire Horizons
Stephen Hills (SH)	South Cambs District Council (Vice Chair)
John O'Mahony (JOM)	Homes & Communities Agency

Action

LAA theme: Delivering Homes - Outcomes of the s106 Housing Project, plus synergy with Suffolk's S106 project (John Patterson, Ark Housing Consultancy & Karen Wickham: Marie Smith, Suffolk DC; Enablers and PPF also invited for this item)

- The seven local authorities (via the sub-regional Enabling Group), commissioned ARK to consider the scope for improving S106 Agreements, and recommend standard clauses for agreements that could be used across the sub-region.
- The outcome produced draft S106 clauses that will offer a comprehensive framework for negotiations. As requested, the clauses are presented as a 'pick and mix' approach, allowing LAs to select clauses most appropriate to particular circumstances.
- Ark's recommendations are as follows:
 - LAs need comprehensive affordable housing SPDs/planning policies to underpin a sub-regional S106 Agreement. The local authorities are at different stages in the evolution of their Local Development

- Framework, and with the documents that form part of this.
 - All seven authorities should work towards a comprehensive Affordable Housing SPD, including model S106 clauses etc. A convergence plan is, therefore, needed for this to happen.
 - Other recommendations are around: viability assessments, future proofing, negotiation of S106s.
- The new clauses have already started to be used. Enablers are pleased with the outcome of the project and wished to thank John Patterson on the research undertaken and the production of the concise and not over-complicated clauses.
 - Three papers were circulated - main report; abridged version not including clauses; model clauses.

Questions

- SP asked how the recommendations assist with challenges to affordable housing requirements. JP emphasised that it is important to be precise about the information you are looking for and what test you will do on the information. Need to confirm how the information will be validated. The Project suggests a way of doing this.
- Alongside the sub-regional S106 work happening, Suffolk has also been doing some work in this area. Marie Smith spoke about Suffolk's experience, they are looking at a whole suite of planning obligations, not just for affordable housing. Suffolk are looking at existing codes of practice for all s106, including education and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) (if it comes into effect), as well as affordable housing. MS strongly recommended that all LAs look at their planning policies first to ensure a consistent approach from the outset.
- DK stated it was a good piece of work but added a note of caution - on larger sites it is important that all major stakeholders are in the same room when S106s are negotiated. Affordable housing is the easiest percentage to squeeze down so robust working is important to ensure all areas get a fair share.
- Mortgagee In Possession clauses – have they been road tested by lenders? The Enablers and JP felt that they generally represented good practice. Of course, flexibility is needed in this clause and all clauses to ensure that individual situations are accommodated.
- Positive feedback from planners had been received on the report, and JP and KW were going to present it to the Chief Planning Officer meeting straight after CRHB.
- MK had reservations about negotiations starting from the assumption of no grant, feeling that it puts LAs on a back foot, as we do get grant, and would rather move backwards from an optimistic position, as opposed to try to move forward from a negative position. JP responded that Ark are not saying that, viability assessments have to start from baseline position. This sub-region has been effective in securing social housing grant. Given this track record it would not be unreasonable to assume a level of grant. However, it will be useful for the LA to understand the nil grant position but this does not have to be shared with the developer.
- The report is funded by Improvement East, who support skills and learning across the region, so we want to share the skills and learning from the ARK report across the region and possibly further.

Action

It was recommended that:

- The report's first recommendation (that the Ark Section 9 – Recommended Model, S106 Clauses be adopted by the CRHB) would not be appropriate as CRHB is not a decision-making body and cannot "adopt" in this way.

- That the report's second recommendation (that CRHB recommend the adoption of the Ark Section 9 – Recommended Model, S106 Clauses to be adopted within district SPDs where possible or other relevant planning guidance, to lend weight to S106s incorporating the clauses) be agreed as this enables district planners to harmonise policy as and when appropriate.
- That the report's third recommendation, that the full report of the Project be published on the Cambridgeshire Horizons Web Site as a research study, be agreed. SB to arrange for this.
- KW and JP to go to CPOs to gain their response to the report and the approach recommended by CRHB.

SB

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2. Introduction to CAA and the CAA process for Cambridgeshire (Keith Bowman, Corporate Policy Manager, and Geoff Hinkins, Corporate Policy Officer)

- Heavily Cambridgeshire branded but also relevant to Suffolk.
- This involves a regular dialogue with the CAA inspector, it is not an inspection event.
- There will be both organisational and area assessments.
- The focus is priority outcomes, targeted within LAA and Sustainable Community Strategies.
- SB is the link from CRHB to the CAA.
- CRHB needs to show progress against aims in the LAA and SCS.
- Need to think about case studies, to demonstrate that we are making a difference and National Indicator performance.
- The TSA, which governs housing associations, is separate in terms of the inspectorate, but how LAs work with RSLs to improve services will be tested.
- The 10 page detailed document and presentation to be circulated following the meeting.

KJB

3. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

- Market condition information – TB still working on this.
- Mortgage scheme – Niki reported that St Edmundsbury will not be pursuing this.
- Extra Care Schemes – Richard O'Driscoll presenting the draft extra care strategy to Cambs Commissioning Body next week. SP will make clear at meeting that it needs to go via DIG and the expectation that it would be presented in draft form to CRHB.
- Cambridge City and East Cambs have put in a joint bid to look at migrant workers. Fenland is putting in a late bid. More detail to be circulated by those who have submitted bids, to share with CRHB.
- Go-East has a new person joining in early June when they will be in a better position to send a representative to CRHB. In the meantime, the Board asked that GoEast continues to send their briefing notes through to keep the sub-region updated.
- It was agreed to publicise the Sub-regional Housing Strategy more widely at the Horizons conference in June.

TB

JH/DH

KJB

4. Sub-Regional Housing Strategy – action plan and equalities impact assessment

- Sub-regional Housing Strategy Action Plan has been turned into a spreadsheet and will be sent to all groups that need to feed in.
- Strategic Housing Group (CSHG) will look at this in more detail.
- SB will report back when feedback on all actions has been received.

5. Work Plan

- The Work Plan was reviewed for the next two meetings.
- Older Peoples Strategy action plan – SP to raise with Claire Bruin at the Commissioning Body meeting next week. **SP**
- Empty Homes methodology – SP to circulate.
- All to pass LA contact responsible for their Empty Homes Strategy to SB to pull together information to share issues and look at consistencies. Is the current economic climate impacting on numbers? Look at issues with validation of numbers with RSLs and auditors. **All**
- CW to circulate Bedfordshire Empty Homes Strategy. **CW**

6. Consultation and Publications

- Paper reviewed.

Actions

- East of England Implementation Plan – SB to draft a response to bring back to the next meeting. **SB/KJB**

8.1 Cambridgeshire Horizons

- Reply sent to Terry Fuller in response to his request for information; wants to air feelings of how the process went for the letter.
- The letter was written by Alex Plant on behalf of the Cambridgeshire districts, and copied in the tables submitted by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury. This was in line with conversations between Alex and Terry Fuller about running a pilot “single conversation” on the County of Cambridgeshire.
- The two Suffolk partners in the sub-region were keen to be included and pleased their information was included with other sub-regional partners’ tables. However, there seems to be a difference in the areas to be covered for the pilot which had not been clear before this exercise was completed.
- There was discussion about whether the “single conversation” was just about growth, or whether it needs to cover more issues and if so, whether the prospectus for growth needs to be made broader.
- The decision that all investment priorities should be made through the single conversation” needs to be considered further. Do districts want to do their own thing or come together? However, the pilot “single conversation appears at present to exclude our Suffolk partners.
- Suffolk districts have invested in the Cambridgeshire sub-region, and wish to continue as such. If they are not part of the sub-region, they aren’t part of any other.
- CRHB agreed to put this on the CSHG agenda to discuss.

8.2 Homes and Communities Agency

- No representative was available to attend.

8.3 Go-East

- No representative was available to attend.

8.4 Regional Housing Advisory Group

- No meeting held since the Board last met.

8.5 Sub-Regional Housing Association Meeting

- Progress with the sub-regional tariff – need to bring to CRHB before it comes to a conclusion. **NH/SB**

- Discussed links to the LAA, the delivery of homes and the role of the RSL forum in relation to CRHB, Cambridgeshire Together and Local Strategic Partnerships.
- For the County land disposal process recently set up, land valuations are out of line with bank valuations – it might be temporary, but it is a problem.

8.6 Cambridge Sub-Region Strategic Housing Group (CSHG)

- Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme – numbers are small.
- Transfer of the Homebuy agent and issues arising from it.
- SB to issue a second Housing Market Bulletin soon.
- New Supporting People Strategy, for April 2010.
- SB met with Cambridgeshire and Suffolk SPs - they will be looking for enablers' input on supported housing schemes to create a regional Annual Statement. Encourage districts to respond, even to say "no comment".

All

8.7 Housing Enablers

- Confirmation of allocations, value and homes delivered from the HCA. FM to circulate figures.
- 60% of this financial year's money has been committed.

FM

8.8 CLIP Sub-Group

- Clip open day event, JH has the details.

8.9 Growth Partnership Board

- Prospectus and action plan, and how to improve on action plan monitoring.
- Investment; robust templates to be completed to ensure LAs can deliver when bids are put forward.
- Housing Growth Fund presentation to CRHB (June)? SB to circulate the headlines.

SB/KJB

9 Any Other Business

- TB handed round a short paper listing the new development surveys. Contact TB if there are any problems with the schedule.
- NH – Cambridge Building Society are currently exploring with SCDC, and are keen to explore with the sub-region, how they might be able to help those who are struggling with getting finance for properties, mortgages, shared ownership. MK to find out who is doing what at SCDC.

MK

10 Future meetings

The next meeting will be held at 10am, on Friday 5 June 2009 at Sanctuary Hereward, Ely.

2009 Meeting Dates:

First Friday of the month, starting at 10am – to finish with lunch by 1.00pm.

3 July – Sanctuary Hereward

2 October – East Cambs DC

7 August – East Cambs

6 November – Sanctuary Hereward

4 September – Sanctuary Hereward

4 December – East Cambs