

SLDC Housing Advisory Group

Minutes of meeting held on the 17 July 2012

Present

Cllr Jonathon Brook(SLDC) – Chair	J Derbyshire (CRHT)
T Whittaker (SLDC)	D Pogson (NPS)
D Hudson (SLDC)	P Greenup (SLDC)
I Withington (SLDC)	Cllr J McCreesh (CALC)
P Allen (LDNPA)	L Reynolds (SLDC)
F McEnaney (CCC)	J Jackson (SLDC)
Cllr A Hall (SLDC/LDNPA)	A Willmott (Impact)
L Campbell (SLDC)	P Thomas (SLH)
J Owen (Home Group)	G Staton (Home Group)
	M McAdam (SLDC)

		Action
1.	<p>Apologies, M Tummey (SLDC), E Brailey (Home), D Stubbs (SLH), G Denwood (Two Castles), M Nicholson (Russell Armer) ,M Henry (Eric Wright).</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting. Approved</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TW reported that the Older Persons Strategy was to be considered by Cabinet on 25th July 2012 	
3.	<p>Tenancy Strategy</p> <p>JJ outlined the proposed Tenancy Strategy, its scope, timetable and consultation feedback from Registered Providers and Tenants on the Council’s recommendations and invited further comment from the Group. Timetable – 29th August Cabinet – published late September.</p> <p><u>Strategy includes a number of recommendations relating to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible tenancies • Affordable rent • Best use of stock in relation to under occupancy and overcrowding and • Protecting vulnerable people and reducing the risk of homelessness <p>The group supported the draft strategy in general and it was stressed (PT) that it should focus on long term provision rather than short term reactions linked to the potential implications of welfare reform.</p> <p>Feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some concern on under occupancy and Welfare reform and effects this could have on Registered Provider’s (RPs) income (potential defaults) and their willingness to provide larger dwellings in the wider market along with the potential implications on the development of stock impacting on choice in the area and communities in the District. • PT raised concerns that the development of large numbers of 1bed dwellings 	

	<p>does not lead to sustainable communities and desired increased quality of life. Historically there are issues around the quality of design, and the creation of “hard to let areas” .There remains a strong aspirational desire for 2 bed properties and it is important that the strategy takes the long term view to provide for the market allowing choice, growth and flexibility, quality and not be dictated to by the perceived implications of welfare reform.</p> <p>In SLH’s review of their stock profile it shows under occupancy is not a big issue in South Lakeland. Social Landlords are very good at matching family size to house type and the effects of welfare reform in the district may not be as bad as feared. It was inferred that welfare reform should not lead to the building of more 1 bedroomed flats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full effect of welfare reform has not yet hit the housing market and it was reported that it may well be a shock for some, however many families in the district will be resilient when it comes to finding the extra income needed to replace any suspected reduced housing benefit and this was evident from the consultation reply’s from tenants and views expressed by SLH (PT). It is believed that a number of tenants would be willing to pay any extra regardless of benefit reform. • Flexible tenancies. – JO stated that Home Group were not looking at introducing flexible tenancies at the moment, but willing to work with the Local Authority. Home Group is to carry out a tenancy review to assess the groups stock / resources and evaluate the potential issues it may encounter due to welfare reform. <p>JD suggested that the Strategy should have a clearer definition included of the term ‘rural’ as this means different things to different people. Perhaps more aligned to the definition used by the Commission for Rural Communities and the HCA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JD suggested that consideration be given to seeking parish councils views on the strategy 	JJ
4.	<p>Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Review.</p> <p>LR gave verbal update on current review of Choice Based lettings and ways forward.</p> <p>Previous feedback has been taken on board and discussed as part of the CBL review and that the Cumbria Choice Board will shortly agree a final position.</p> <p>A breakdown of lettings per banding was presented and discussed.</p> <p>This letting history shows that between May 2011 (start date of the single allocation policy across Cumbria) and March 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2920 households registered • 176 properties were allocated across the district. • 20.5% allocations go to households in Band A • 17% go to households in band B • 39.2 % go to households in band C with the remainder split between D, D+ and E • The vast majority of allocations go to those of “reasonable preference” • The statistics also demonstrate the shortage of properties. Most of the households registered are classed in band D- E and given the (2176) low supply they stand little chance of being allocated a property against those in band A- C (744) <p>The review found that the general banding was working, fair, liked and that the scheme brought an element of choice and openness to the allocation system.</p>	

	<p>However but the banding did limit the choice of properties.</p> <p>Changes proposed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the same sex shared bedroom age to 16 from 21 • A re-banding of those tenants who are in financial hardship due to welfare reform (benefit reductions- due to under occupying) to help them down size • Remove priority currently given to those in HMO's so that they are given the same priority as someone living at home. <p>Concerns were raised that welfare reforms may lead to an increase in arrears and affect RP's income. RPs in Cumbria have different levels and types of stock. This means that there is not likely to be a common approach to the size of property that applicants would be allowed in the future. Instead RPs may have different approaches depending on their assessment of risk and stock profile. This approach would be agreed with SLDC and clearly explained on the Cumbria Choice website.</p>	
5.	<p>Affordable Housing Funding</p> <p>TW outlined the Council's current approach to funding in relation to the second homes fund as presented in his report.</p> <p>In addition due to the likely increase in supply of affordable homes to rent (50% of the requirement) and the implications this may have on RP's funds and ability to borrow funds and invest it is proposed to add South Lakes Housing and Riverside Housing Association to the list of RP Development Partners.</p> <p>It is clear that developers will have to work more closely with Housing Associations in the future to help provide the 50% rental ask.</p>	
6.	<p>LDF Updates</p> <p>LDNPA - PA reported that after additional dialogue with stakeholders their land Allocation DPD now contains a reduced amount of sites in South Lakeland - 20 in total . They now aim to consult on soundness in January 2013.</p> <p>SLDC – DH reported that the land Allocations Document was submitted shortly after the last meeting. An inspector has been appointed and it is expected that the examination will be around the end of September this year. A further view on the DPD's Compliance with the NPPF has been held and responses forwarded onto the inspector to consider.</p>	
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>University of Cumbria aims / Ambleside Campus.</p> <p>Concerns were raised over the approach being taken by the University in developing its plans to re open the campus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consultation with SLDC as the Strategic Housing Authority • Concerns that the University plans could affect the local housing market significantly <p>PA reported that the LDNPA produced Supplementary Planning Guidance to guide development proposals and that the University should be utilising this guidance in its masterplan approach and that the LDNPA are aware of proposals.</p> <p>PA to take concerns back to Chris Warren and advise of any appropriate contact for SLDC. There may be the potential to invite a representative to speak at the next HAG meeting In October.</p>	PA / TW

Date of next meeting: 30 October 2012, arrive 9.45 for 10.00 start – Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall.

