

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
PLENARY**

Date: 25 March 2010

Subject: **Regional Housing and Regeneration Board**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the South East England Councils note the report.

Purpose of the Report

To update the South East England Councils on the work of the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board.

1. Matters arising not Elsewhere on the Agenda

- 1.1 Howard Ewing confirmed that the region had been successful in all the bids for Rural Masterplanning funding with 13% of the funding coming to this region. The 7 projects are located in Shepway, Isle of Wight, East Hampshire. HARA, Winchester, South Oxford/ Vale of Wight Horse and Milton Keynes.
- 1.2 He also mentioned that Defra are going to consult on the need to reform the land registration system to prevent the 'village green' blocking on sites for development in rural areas.
- 1.3 GOSE have also recently written to the RHRB Chairman outlining the work of the SEEDC's sub-group on housing. This has now been disbanded and they wanted confirmation that the key items of work would be taken up by the RHRB. It was confirmed that these items would be included in the revised business plan.

2. Annual Monitoring Report 2009

- 2.1. This was discussed at length and included additional information gathered as part of the annual questionnaire to local authorities but not usually included in the published report. The secondary data collected from other sources illustrated the sort of information available for the quarterly update for the Board and included repossessions and affordability. The Board instructed the Project Team to consider at greater length the key issues affecting delivery with a view to reporting back to the next board meeting.

3. HCA Quarterly Report

- 3.1 Although this report to the end of December 2009 shows an underperformance in terms of the percentage of expenditure (54%) Paul Abey confirmed that the HCA were on target to spend all money this year with the aim of committing as much as possible of next year's planned money by April. He estimated that £300m would be allocated for the NAHP subject to the budget being approved.
- 3.2 The affect of HomeBuy Direct was noted as this has pushed the intermediate completions over target and it was requested that this should be reported separately in future.
- 3.3 Members were concerned about the number of funding streams still in existence. David Edwards confirmed that they were still looking at how to streamline these having inherited 17 programmes when they merged with English Partnerships. He mentioned that Open Market HomeBuy will not be available in future.
- 3.4 The issue of value for money for both Kickstart and the local authority newbuild programmes was also raised as a concern. It was confirmed that although Decent Homes funding was not due to continue next year there are still some local authorities who will not meet their targets and information on this would be provided to the next Board meeting. It was likely that for 2 local authorities operating ALMO's the funding would continue beyond 2011.

4. Regional Funding Advice

4.1 Martin Tugwell introduced this report as the start of the process for identifying the priorities for the reduced regional funding pot over the next few years.

4.2 Following Board discussion the priorities were summarised as:

- ◆ affordable housing,
- ◆ the need to better manage funding and protect other income streams.

The Thames Gateway and infrastructure projects have a lesser priority.

4.3 Martin Tugwell outlined some other considerations for the Board including:

- ◆ the implications for of the new Warm Homes standard,
- ◆ the greater flexibility to local delivery likely to be offered by the Total Place approach being adopted in the Regional Delivery Plan,
- ◆ the need to reduce carbon emissions which would require high levels of investment in retrofitting existing homes and
- ◆ the need to join up thinking between the 3 delivery boards.

4.4 The Board agreed to advise the Strategy Board of the likelihood that the South East is predicted to underperform by 20% in terms of delivery of affordable housing targets over the current spending review period and to inform them of the initial summary of priorities agreed at the meeting. A further report on the regional delivery plan will be presented to the next Board meeting in June.

5. Gypsies and Travellers Site Grant

5.1. The Board received details of the successful bids for last year and the bidding timetable for this year. Concern was expressed at the under allocation of last year's funding with only one new pitch approved for the region. Paul Abey confirmed that the remaining money would be rolled over and they would support an 'in year' bidding process to allocate this funding. Members expressed concern at the short deadline for this year's bidding which is now the 30 April not June. The review of value for money for pitch provision was recently announced by John Denham and it was agreed that the Chairman would write to him summarising the experiences of the Board in relation to value for money issues to be included in the review's terms of reference.

6. HRA new subsidy arrangements

6.1 No announcements have been made by CLG so far but it was hoped these would be revealed by the end of March.

7. The London Plan response and the London Housing Strategy

7.1 Members noted the response to the London Plan submitted by the Partnership Board and the criticisms raised by John Healey in response to the housing strategy published on the 24th February. The EIP for the Plan will

give members the opportunity to raise concerns regarding the proposals on provision of affordable homes and the reliance on windfall sites.

8. The Regional Strategy Project Plan and Regional Delivery Plan

- 8.1 Martin Tugwell outlined the timetable for both and the opportunities for members to get involved in both. The RDP first stage work would be presented to the next Board meeting.

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