

Local Government North Yorkshire and York

6 December 2013

General Updates

Report of the Honorary Secretary

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide a brief update on issues which do not require a full paper.
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2.0 Sub-Regional Housing Board – Report of Wallace Sampson (Chief Executive, Harrogate Borough Council)

Enhanced two tier project title: Affordable Housing

Project Description: Working together to increase the number of affordable housing units

Project Lead: Colin Dales, Richmondshire District Council 01748 901002. E-mail: colin.dales@richmondshire.gov.uk

2.1.1 Progress to date/update

- (a) North Yorkshire Home Choice (choice based lettings) has concluded its review after the first year of operation. A revised policy is now operational.
- (b) Work is on-going to strengthen the links between housing investment priorities and economic priorities of the new (LEP) Growth Strategy in order to ensure that new funding opportunities are maximised. The Local Government York and NY Housing Board has previously agreed that the link between housing and the LEP needed to be strengthened via the new Growth Strategy. The Housing Board received an update report on 25 November articulating what the key links are and highlighting new / emerging housing investment “asks”. This will ensure that key housing messages cross over into the Growth Plan and vice versa, thus ensuring close alignment of these two key strategic priorities. A key development in this respect is the possibility of North Yorkshire having a ring fenced housing allocation managed via the Homes and Communities Agency for the next spending review period – the Housing Board welcomed a ring fenced allocation in principle as this will give a degree of realism and certainty in future planning – an approach which worked well during 2008 / 2011 investment period. Further work still has to be done on the housing narrative within the draft Growth Strategy and the associated investment “asks” but the LEP and the Housing Board are working together to ensure deadlines are met. In terms of governance, the Housing Board will feed into the Infrastructure (Leaders’) Board and further clarity is being sought on how this will work in practice.

- (c) The North Yorkshire Housing Strategy Manager, Sarah Hall is settling into her new role very well and is the key link regarding the LEP and the Housing Board.
- (d) The Young Peoples Pathway (HUB) services have been reviewed. These services cater for homeless young people and bring key agencies / funding together including Supporting People, Local Authorities and Children Services. The key outcome of the review is that additional resources have been made available in order to strengthen the pathway work in each District / Borough via supporting people and young people's services. Interim arrangements have been agreed pending a more fundamental review to be undertaken over the next 12 months.
- (e) There is growing concern regarding Government proposals to change the way disabled facilities grants are funded and administered and how this will work in a two tier environment. Current advice suggests that "ownership" of DFGs will transfer from Districts / Boroughs to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The District Chief Executive representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board, Janet Waggott, is making representations accordingly.
- (f) The North Yorkshire Housing Partnership's annual report will be available via the partnership's website within the next three weeks.

2.2 Barriers to progressing the project over the next period

- (a) The main barrier continues to relate to current housing market conditions which are hindering the contribution that the planning system can make to affordable homes delivery. However, housing market conditions and associated confidence are improving and this barrier is expected to lower in the preceding months.
- (b) Lack of suitable land continues to be a barrier to the delivery of affordable housing although local authority planning frameworks are continuing to develop with a growing number receiving or anticipating Planning Inspectorate approval. This progress should ease housing land supply in general terms.
- (c) Homes and Communities Agency funding has been cut as part of CSR by approximately 70% which has created a great deal of uncertainty in terms of future outputs. Funding is based on a new affordable housing model whereby rents are up to 80% of market levels. This is impacting differently across the county depending on housing benefit levels and the strength of the private rental market. We are awaiting confirmation of resources likely to be available during the next funding round but more flexibilities in terms of HCA funding are anticipated.
- (d) Private sector housing improvement funding ceased from 1 April 2011 as a direct result of CSR. Local authorities still have the freedom to fund private sector housing renewal from their own funds, but current feedback from local authority colleagues is that this area of activity has reduced significantly with Disabled Facilities Grants being the core business.

3.0 Sub-Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Board – Report of Ian Stokes (Development Officer (Transport Strategy), City of York Council)

(A report was awaited at the time when LGNYA Agenda papers were printed and circulated.)

4.0 Yorkshire and Humberside European Regional Development Fund Performance Management Board for North East and West Yorkshire – Report of Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council)

4.1 The PMB met again on 18 September 2013 but I was unable to attend.

5.0 Yorkshire and Humber Member Improvement and European Board – Report of Councillor Derek Bastiman (Scarborough Borough Council) on behalf of himself and Councillor Tracey Simpson-Laing (City of York Council)

5.1 The Improvement Board has not met since my last report. The next ERDF meeting is scheduled for mid November.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That the report be noted.

Richard Flinton

Honorary Secretary to Local Government North Yorkshire and York

18 November 2013